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MONSTER WORLD

JUL/AUG 2011 #256

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FAMOUS
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#256
JUL/AUG 2011

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SPEAKING OF MONSTERS

Celebrating Tsuburaya & Honda



The Godfathers of Godzilla: Eiji Tsuburaya and Ishiro Honda

When I was still in grammar school, *Eiji Tsuburaya* was the first Japanese name I memorized when I saw it in a *TV Guide* listing for *Attack of the Mushroom People*, which stated, “Special Effects by Eiji Tsuburaya.” While a lot of fans will cite *Famous Monsters* #114 as an influential issue, for me one was even more important: #110, which featured an article on Eiji Tsuburaya (reprinted from *FM* #60). I must have read that article over and over a thousand times, and coupled with issues of Greg Shoemaker’s seminal *Japanese Fantasy Film Journal*, I started to learn the hows, the whys—and the whos—of this genre. This is what began to fascinate me the most—who were these people who made these movies, and why did they make them. Eventually, these questions led to the publication of my first book, *Eiji Tsuburaya*.

Master of Monsters, in 2007—which brought me right back to *FM* #110.

After being a respected cinematographer for more than twenty years, Tsuburaya moved into the field of special technical photography after seeing a screening of *King Kong*, a film that changed his life—and that of many others when he became the head of the special technical department at Toho Studios in the late 1930s. While he became the forerunner of the effects industry in Japan, with numerous awards under his belt, it wasn’t until the production of *Godzilla* in 1954 that he became known outside of Japan. Numerous such films followed, each greater than the next, and by the mid-1960s he had also created Japan’s greatest superhero.

Tsuburaya was truly a filmmaker before his time, setting standards for decades, and was able to push the envelope in the analog age, going far beyond the technical means of his day. His skills as a model builder, engineer, and cinematographer aided him with his ingenious ideas for visual effects, and his passion for his craft shows through in every frame of film. His meticulous attention to miniature detail is legendary, and his sense of wonder renown. It is truly his visions—his visual effects—that have taken me to places I never imagined, and helped me befriend those I would’ve never met otherwise. This is not to mention the joy that his films have given me, and millions of fellow fans throughout the world, which continue to do so to this day. When I think of Tsuburaya, I often think of this quote of his that appeared in an issue of the long-forgotten American magazine, *Caper*, from 1965:

“My heart and mind are as they were when I was a child. Then I loved to play with toys and to read stories of magic. I still do. My wish is only to make life happier and more beautiful for those who will go and see my films of fantasy.”

Your wish certainly came true, Mr. Tsuburaya, beyond your wildest dreams, and it continues to make our lives happier—thank you. Hopefully, this issue of *Famous Monsters* will honor you in return!

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Diamond retail cover by
BOB EGGLETON!



Newsstand cover by
PAUL GERRARD!

OPENING WOUNDS

Famous Monsters 256 was created with two goals in mind. The first was to take you on a journey back to Forry's *Famous Monsters*, specifically Issue 114, when giant Japanese monsters roamed the earth. The second was to let all those Monster Kids who were influenced by the original Kaiju (the Japanese term for their giant monsters) coverage in *FM* share how Godzilla and his brethren have forever cemented their legacies in Monsterdom.

And while this issue has been amongst the most fun to produce, a more serious goal emerged throughout its creation. When it was first decided that Issue 256 would be an all-Japanese monster issue, it was well before the devastating earthquakes and tsunamis ravaged Japan. To this point, while the magazine is primarily about entertainment and escape, this time out we raise it to a higher calling—one of charity and a reaching-out to help our fellow man.

As you read through this issue please be reminded that, while the worst of the tragedy in Japan may be past, the suffering there is still very real. It will take months—years, even—for so many of the people to return to just a simple, quiet life. Others have had their lives affected in ways that can never be repaired. Inside the magazine you'll find a great image, created by our good friend Paul Garner of Godzilla with a hard hat preparing to rebuild his home. It's featured along with information as to how you can contribute to the Red Cross to help ease the suffering in a country that, as this issue attests, has given us so many amazing monster memories.

We also want to take this time to thank our great friends who helped to make this issue all that it could be, friends like Kaiju expert and author August Ragone, and Godzilla artist extraordinaire, Bob Eggleton. With their support we were able to create something that will truly entertain and enlighten even the most dedicated of giant monster fans.

And now, without further delay, let the colossal Kaiju cage match of 2011 commence!

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FORREST J ACKERMAN

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Famous Monsters,

I want to write and personally thank you for the great film festival that you put on in Beverly Hills. It was a true pleasure to get to know your staff and crew as my team enjoyed the show you put on. From Roger Corman to Victoria Price, from *The Masque of the Red Death* to *Dracula*, it was an event put on with great love and respect for the classics, while also paving the way for modern filmmakers, like myself, to launch their careers into the future. I can see why the Famous Monsters name is worthy of its reputation, and I think the new staff is taking it exactly where it needs to go. I look forward to watching the Famous Monsters Image-Movies Film Festival grow in the years to come, and I am proud to consider myself a part of the Famous Monsters family. Jonathan Martin, Director, *An Evening with My Comatose Mother*.

Thank you for your support and welcome to the fangily!

Hi

This is a typical editor's letter, I suppose. Except that I've accidentally erased three paragraphs. D*** this mail client. Now I must start from scratch.

Anyway, I just recently discovered FM, and I want to say that it is of much higher quality than many horror magazines I've encountered. There are well-researched, sophisticated articles, a layout that doesn't give me a headache, and sentences that have actually been PROOFREAD [gasp]. So I must

thank you, from the bottom of my grammar-nazi, professional-editing, horror-loving heart. And the most recent Lovecraft issue! Gahh! Tentacles! Lovecraft, my love! It was perfect. My only complaint comes from Richard Schellbach's 'I AM GEEK' article, which claimed that geeks are 'almost always' males who think that memorizing geeky information will somehow 'impress women'. See, I am a 30 year old woman who collects action figures and stuffed microbes and comic books. I have a DVD collection that consists almost entirely of anime, horror, and porn. I have had conversations about the difference between AT-AT and AT-ST walkers, and I do, in fact, bathe [gasp!] What does that make me? [I would attach a picture of myself reenacting a black and white chocolate syrup bloodbath, but that might be overkill, yes?]

At any rate, keep up the good work, and if you ever have a need for an editor, proofreader, writer, model, or general nerd-culture chick, please give me a buzz. <3 Cheers! Holly I

Thank you for all your preys, we try our beast!

So glad FM is available at the local Barnes and Noble (our Borders recently closed). I remember growing up and getting to look at FM that my cousin or somebody else might have. The first issue that I purchased myself was #30 (Bela Lugosi/Dracula cover). I saved up my money to purchase it. What a treat! Although my original is

long gone, I was able to purchase a copy on ebay, in relatively good shape.

I'm looking forward to future issues, as well as FM Underground! Again, thanks for the memories! Todd Rebillot Franklin, Wisconsin

I saw *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* and I am amazed how *Harry Potter* went from a fantasy movie to a horror movie. The latest version has every element of horror to it and my date was cringing throughout the whole movie. *Harry Potter* truly fits into your magazine *Famous Monsters*!
-Paul Dale Roberts

Dear Famous Monsters,

I just wanted to drop you a postcard and tell you how much I enjoyed issue #255! I am a huge H P Lovecraft fan and I can never seem to get enough! Keep up the great work, maybe one day soon I'll be in *Famous Monsters*. Cheers, C P Kaestne Author, Artist, and Paranormal Researcher. RIPMidwest.com



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FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE SILLY EARLY JAPANESE IMAGI-MOVIES

BY DENNIS BILLOWS



Imagine a dense forest of tall, swaying reeds along the edge of a lake.
Reeds that rustle in the wind.
Eerily. Ominously.
Like a dangerous, living creature.

It is not the enemy they have been fleeing. Two grim-faced women, one old and one young, with eyes as cold as death, strip the bodies of armor with swift, practiced ease, for they have done this many times before, then they drag the half-naked men to a pit and throw them in.

This is the opening of Kaneto Shindo's *Onibaba* (Demon Woman, 1964), a frightening story of murder and the terrible vengeance that supernatural forces exact. The time is feudal Japan. Famine and war have devastated the country. A mother and her young step-daughter, driven by hunger, murder lost Samurai to sell their armor for food. As a drama of lust and jealousy and betrayal unfolds, a mysterious masked Samurai arrives. He seems different from the others, and he wears the mask of a demon, but no matter—he is killed and the mother uses his hideous mask to frighten her wayward step-daughter back under her control. That night the supernatural forces of retribution horribly punish the women for their life of murder...and the sound the reeds make in the wind is like evil laughter.

Onibaba is beautifully photographed, the acting is near perfect, the choices made by the characters are all too human and, on the practical side, it is a perfect



Art from the coverbook booklet of **VAMPIRE HUNTER D** (top left) **The Japanese film posters for HALF HUMAN (right) & WARNING FROM SPACE** (bottom left)

宇宙人東京に現わる

example of what can be done with a limited film budget.

Japanese films can be very powerful. They can also be wacky and fun.

You never knew what to expect in the early years.

ALL MONSTERS GREAT
and SMALL

Japan entered the golden age of image-movie making after the appearance of *Gogira* (*Godzilla*) in 1954, the story about a prehistoric, radioactive beast. It was the first of many cautionary tales

about the abuse of atomic power. *Gogira* was wildly popular and spawned a whole dynasty of giant Japanese film monsters, but there were many other creations—

Mists that became men.

Ghosts who exacted terrible vengeance.

Nonhuman extraterrestrials that viewed our world with envious eyes and took what they wanted.

Juhyu Yuki Otoko (*Half Human*, 1955) has recently been on a self-imposed home video and television moratorium in Japan, due to the film's negative portrayal of the mountain people, which caused complaints all the 1980s. The plot involved the discovery in the Japanese Alps of a large,

ape-like creature. When an alien is made to capture it, the ape-man's son is mistakenly captured. The adult came to its rescue, but the son was killed. In his rage the ape-man killed the intruders, destroyed a village, and in the end was himself killed.

The following year (1956) saw the first appearance of the giant flying reptile, *Rodan* (*Rodan*), and the Japanese "Green Lantern", *Super Giant* (*Super Giant*). *Super Giant* was brought to the U.S. in the early 1960s in a series of films under the titles *Atomic Rulers of the World*, *Invasion From Space*, *Attack Form Space*, and *The Evil Brain From Outer Space*.

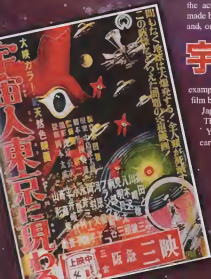
That same year warlike-like aliens with an eye in the middle of their bodies came to warn us of a planet on a collision course with Earth in *Uchuujin Tokyo Ni Arawaru* (*Warning From Space*, also known as *Mysterious Satellite*). Humanity had to put aside its petty squabbles and unite to destroy the doomsday planet.

FROM THE FEUDAL TO THE FUTURISTIC

Kaidan Kosane Ga Fushi (*The Ghosts of Kosane Swamp*, 1957) recounts the legend of a blind masseuse murdered by a greedy nobleman after having been asked to return money that the nobleman had borrowed. The nobleman's guilty conscience (or a ghost) frightens him into mistakenly "killing" his wife. He then drowns while fleeing the specter of the man he killed. This is a well-paced, eerie entry into ghost story cinema filmed by renowned horror director, Nakagawa Nobuo, who would direct dozens of supernatural films.

We were invaded by *The Mysterians* in 1957, originally released in Japan as *Chikyū Boei Gun—or The Earth Defense Force*. The Alien invasion of Earth with marvelous special effects created by Eiji Teuburaya alone is worth the price of the movie, but it has a problem—the same problem that faced most Japanese image-movies of the time. Filmmakers could not decide if the film should be taken seriously or if it should be marketed for children. And when the choice teetered between the juvenile and the sublime...well, the sublime was not the final choice. "The invasion is cool—but, for age

Here are 3 action shots from the invasion movie **THE MYSTERIANS**



mad scientist's laboratory. I wanted that sentence to sound as convoluted as the plot. This could have been a hysterical comedy. When the eyeball pops out of his shoulder instead of freaking out, the hero should have grabbed a glass and toasted it with the words "Here's looking at you, kid!" or it could have been given the ability to talk so we could hear the hero say "Shut up! I don't want to hear any more of your eye-dull chit-chat!" or he could have looked directly at his shoulder and said: "Eyedentify yourself!"

In *Yoshi Goroshi* (*Gorath*), a runaway star is on a collision-course with Earth. We change the Earth's orbit so it misses us...it missed with audiences as well.

In 1963 the flying submarine, *Keitei Gunkan* (*Atragon*), flew in and out of theaters.

One of my personal favorites, *Matango* (*Attack of the Mushroom People*), a film of sheer horror and a cult favorite, only gained limited release. Don't let the title fool you, this film has well-crafted characters, 'creeps' galore, an unusual storyline, and excellent special effects. Although W. H. Hodgson's short story "A Voice in the Night" is credited as the inspiration for this film, I suspect it was actually based on the 1923 Argosy Magazine novelette "Fungus Island" by Philip M. Fisher. In "Fungus Isle" people are shipwrecked on a strange island which is covered with fungi and populated by burraploid fungus people. They learn that the fungi will transform humans into walking mushrooms if spores settle on you or if you eat them and; if eaten, the fungi produce a drug-induced euphoria. Since there is no other food on the island... Well, that about sums up the plot of *Matango*.



DOGORA DAY AFTERNOON

Uchu Daikajin Dogora (*Dogora, The Space Monster* 1964) was a giant, space jellyfish, living in our atmosphere with a hunger for carbon. First it ate diamonds, then people. When it learned that humans were delicious, the *die-mand* was cast. The wonderful, translucent, tentacled monsters (a mixture of puppetry and animation) were terrific and showed what could be created without putting a man in a rubber suit.

The 1960s produced many fine Japanese films like the award-winning supernatural films *Kwaidan* (1964) and *Onibaba* (1964). Giant monster movies like the trilogy *Daimajin* (*Majin*), *Daimajin Ikari* (*Return of Majin*), and *Daimajin Gyoakushu* (*Wrath of Daimajin*) were all released in 1966, soon followed by *Furankenshtain No Kaijin*.

Sanda Tai Gaira (*War of the Gargantuas*, 1966), and *Daikyoku Gappa* (*Gappa, The Triphibian Monster*; 1967). A decent horror film, *Kyuketsuki Gokenudoro* (*Goke, The Body Snatcher from Hell*) was released in 1968. In all fairness, I should mention the downright awful films like *Gamma Datsan Ga: Uku Daisakusen* (*The Green Slime*, 1968) and *Ido Zero Daisakusen* (*Latitude Zero*, 1969).

Vintage Japanese films are a mixture of the silly and the sublime—but Japan certainly is not alone in this. Americans have their awful Ed Wood films and their classics like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). The Japanese have the silly *Monster* and the wonderful *Throne of Blood*.

There's room in the cinema universe for all types of films. Some teach, some entertain, some you scratch your head and wonder why they were made—but hopefully you learn something from each one.

Some of us who grew up on Japanese fantasy films have mixed feelings about them. The special effects by today's standards are crude and primitive. Some of the acting is over-the-top...well, most of it. But each film, when viewed today, is a door into a world that doesn't exist anymore.

The Isle of Monsters where Godzilla and the other giant monsters lived is gone:

The map to the island of the mushroom people is lost.

The ghosts of Yotsuya and those in Kasane Swamp are appeased. But we shouldn't turn our back on them...

"That is not dead which can eternal lie,

And with strange oceans even death may die." (H.P. Lovecraft)

Italian movie poster for **ATTACK OF THE MUSHROOM PEOPLE.**

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FAMOUS OF FILMLAND

2011

STOMPING STORES

THE IDW GODZILLA RETAIL PROMOTION

BY MATT FRANK

*You'd think that a radiation-exhaling, square-cube-law-defying prehistoric reptile pulverizing your local comic book store into so many matchsticks and chunks of drywall would be, in a nutshell, bad for business. However, almost 100 stores seemed to think the exact opposite, and here we sit on the tail end of what very well could be the greatest comic book launch promotion in the history of sequential art—or at least the relatively recent history of IDW Publishing. This is the drastically abridged story behind the cover project for *Godzilla: Kingdom of Monsters*, Issue 1.*

When the news broke that IDW had acquired the Godzilla license, I set about badgering Chris Ryall, Creative Director of the company, to let me in on the action. Having worked on a smidgen of *Transformers*-related jobs with IDW in the past, I had something of a connection and, of course, being a frighteningly rabid Godzilla fan, I was determined to do whatever it took to be involved. As serendipity would have it, Ryall wrote me back and informed me of a little idea that Chris Mowry, IDW's resident *kaiju* otaku, had formulated: a series of promotional covers featuring Godzilla's monstrous foot obliterating certain comic shops. All the shops had to do was call or write in, order copies a'plenty, and they'd get their place of business on the cover, exclusive to the store!

As the weeks passed and the deadline crept closer to the horizon, I began to get emails informing me about the number of stores signing up.

At that juncture, it was somewhere between ten and twenty. Not too shabby! I had about two weeks to get them done, and with the foot itself already completed as the core art, it would be a snap to simply switch out the stores, draw them using reference photos, and color digitally. I was all set and churning out covers at a pace that surprised even myself, until I started getting more emails. The numbers were quickly jumping. Eventually, we had 75 stores.

Needless to say, it was a rush of both *excitement and panic*. It was thrilling to see how the project had grown, but how on God's green earth was I going to get 75 covers done inside of 2 weeks?! The short

answer was that I needed help. So I, along with IDW editor Bobby Curnow, began reaching out to artists we had worked with in the past, and eventually we brought together multiple teams of about twelve artists each, all working 'round the clock, while I continued to draw covers as well. Since it was initially my own project, I felt responsible for its success in making the deadline, so I made sure to stay on everyone's backside, cracking the whip and keeping tabs on who did what and when (especially since many of us were in different time zones!). Granted, when all was said and done, three-times-twenty-five covers had been completed, and we were

plenty proud. The mountain had been climbed, and a flag stuck in the summit.

There was more work to be done, for sure. Toho still had final approval over all our work, not to mention the notes that our otherwise very appreciative clients had made. They were usually along the lines of "my son's head isn't that big" or "could we have a helicopter and flames and a wee bit more chaos and calamity?" The project caused such a wave throughout the retail circuit that before we knew what was what, a second printing was under way, with TWENTY MORE STORES. Back to the Bristol paper and Wacom tablets!

Of course, now that another (slightly shorter) mountain had been conquered, I was able to personally work on just about all of the covers, including edits. I drew about 40 or so of the final 95 covers, give or take. It all blurs together after a while. All in all, it was a heck of a thing, and we're all very proud of what we accomplished. I'm currently working on incentive covers for the ongoing *Kingdom of Monsters*, which includes collectible *kaiju* portraits and, by the grace of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, more beyond that!

A much-deserved shoutout is warranted to our crack team of artists who stepped up to help me complete this monumental project: Josh Perez, Gordon Purcell, John-Paul Bove, Cassandra Gibbs, Joana Lafuente, Jamie Snell, Liam Shalloo, Kote Carvajal, Alan Robinson, Kris Carter, and Frank Parr. Go Team Store-Smashers!





VISIONS IN VINYL, CRAZY FOR KAIJU, GODZILLA BLOWS IN THE DARK

BY DAVID DOPKO



I am in no way an expert toy collector; I am, however, passionate about learning about and collecting Japanese toys. This article is my personal trip down memory lane that I hope will remind you of the very special day you saw, bought, and held that first collectible!

For me, it all started on a trip to Woolworth's in Pine Beach, New Jersey circa 1972. I entered the store on that fateful day with a good kindergarten report card in my hand that entitled me to any toy of my choice! As I passed several shelves of possibilities, I eventually rounded the corner in the bobby aisle, and there it was: an Aurora Glow-in-the-Dark Godzilla model kit! I was drawn to the bold graphics and beautiful artwork, which I learned much later on was created by James Bama, the celebrated monster box artist. I immediately grabbed the large box and said, without hesitation, "I want this," and the rest is history! As we drove the few blocks in our Ford Country Squire station wagon, I could not wait to get home to tear open the box and build (with the help of my father, of course) one of the best toys I would ever own!

Before that day, I had only ever seen the movie *Monster Zero*, co-starring Rodan and King Ghidorah, who had a spectacular battle on the slopes of Mt. Fuji. It wasn't long before I saw the original *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*. I even cried when Godzilla was killed. Little did I know that he would live on to star in many more movies!

It was about a year later that I discovered another amazing Japanese TV show—the incredible *Ultraman*! The first episode I watched that day dealt with the Science Patrol doing battle with the

dinosaur-like monster Gohora (Gomora in Japan). From that day on, I never missed an episode! My friends and I would stage mock battles on the beach, taking turns being Ultraman or one of the many freaky and colorful monsters or alien invaders threatening earth. Some of my favorite monsters from the series are Dada, Red King, Dodongo and Keronia.

Over the years I acquired a smattering of Godzilla merchandise, including model kits of Rodan and King Ghidorah by Aurora for their "Monsters of the Movies" series. Back in the 70s in New Jersey, there was very little in the way of Godzilla related merchandise, and virtually nothing of Ultraman. Of course, I could always get my fix of Godzilla along with his friends and foes in the pages of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*! I especially enjoyed the Basil Gogos cover featuring Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla! As the 70s came to a close, Japanese fantasy movies were being shown less, and my interest in them was about to be put on hold. A little movie called *Star Wars* was now what my friends and I were about.

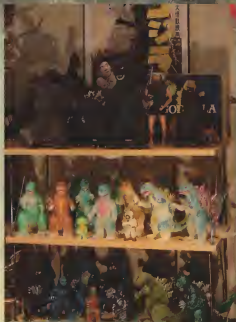
It wasn't until the mid 80s during trips to New York City that my passion was awakened once again. I discovered great shops like Forbidden Planet, Village Comics, and Children of Paradise on Bleeker Street—where I actually ended up working on weekends after I moved to NYC!



Ultraman, Ultraman, and more Ultraman!



The many colors of Godzilla



Do you really think Dave would notice if we took just one?

There was an explosion of Godzilla merchandise in 1984 after the King of the Monsters returned to the screen. The Japanese toy company Bandai was producing an array of vinyl figures depicting Godzilla, as well as representations of his allies and villains. The first new figure I bought was a Bandai 1984 Godzilla for a whopping ten dollars. That same figure now goes for \$100 to \$150! My collection and obsession grew when I bought the larger 1962 and 1964 Bandai Godzilla figures. The three figures still have a special place in my collection.

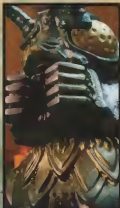
Bandai released other kaiju figures throughout the years, including Rodan, King Ghidorah, Mothra, Baragon, and Angilas, to name a few. The company also released figures that coincided with the new movies, like *Godzilla vs Biollante* in 1989 and up through 2005's *Godzilla: Final Wars*. The figures are very detailed and still highly sought-after. I also began snapping up Bandai's line of Ultraman figures. These were slightly smaller than the Godzilla series and had a smaller price tag.

In the early 90s, I started to become interested in resin and vinyl Godzilla garage model kits. Remember, these were the days before online shopping, so my friend and fellow collector Greg and I would scour the NYC neighborhoods in search of the latest releases. I have such fond memories of those days! A great shop in NYC's

SoHo called Zakka was my store of choice to acquire the latest Billiken and Kaiyodo kits. I think my favorite piece that I picked up there was a huge rubber 1964 Godzilla kit, sculpted by Yuji Sakai for M1, that stands almost 2 feet tall and comes with glass eyes! He was difficult to build. I had to construct a padded wire frame from hangers to support the realistic rubber skin. All that

hard work paid off, though, because the end result was spectacular!

In 1997, my partner and I moved to San Francisco, where I moved into the next phase of my collecting journey: vinyl figures. The toy companies M1 and Marmit began producing Godzilla and Ultraman in soft vinyl. They were a bit larger than the Bandai but still had realistic sculpts. M1 created reproductions of vintage Bullmark and Marusan figures, using the same molds but with unusually vibrant color sprays. These figures had a particular appeal because they were representations of the first kaiju toys ever produced, and cheap enough to not have to get a 2nd mortgage on our house! Of course I have Godzilla and some of the more obscure suspects, as well as the giant cuttlefish *Queen* from the film *Yog Monster from Space*! Well, Marmit created several lines of figures, including the Vinyl Paradise and the Paradise ones. My personal favorite is Monster Heavens. I also began





Abandon all adulthood, ye who enter.



Hail to the King, baby!



Even Godzilla waits in line at the DMV.

collecting glow in the dark vinyls of Godzilla and Ultraman characters. It must have been the memories of that first Glow-in-the-Dark Godzilla model kit that drew me toward these! Hero's Club, Super 7, Kimono My House, and Howling Bull were among my favorite haunts in the SF area. I met some great people who owned and worked in those shops.

I was lucky enough to make it to Japan in 2006 and experience the incredible showcase shops such as Manderake and several others in the Nakano area of Tokyo. I was like a kid in a candy store!

I now live in Seattle, which does not have any shops that cater to Japanese toys, so eBay and other internet sites are how I acquire new items. My new obsession is collecting the amazing (and expensive) X-Plus Godzilla and Ultraman figures. They are so incredible! The figures are highly detailed and have super realistic paint jobs; they look like they stepped right off of the screen! They come pretty much pre-assembled; all you need to do is pop on the tail and place it on the shelf! My favorites figures are Godzilla 1962, '64, and '68, as well as the awesome Baragon, which are all in the 30cm line! I have my eyes peeled on the internet at all times so that I can snag Angilas and Gorosaurus and make that little collection complete.

Shopping online is easier and more efficient, but it does not hold a candle to discovering a great find in a dusty old toy shop or forgotten alley! When people ask me why I am so into this hobby, all I can say is that it reminds me of a simpler time and brings back great childhood memories of the rainy Saturday afternoons my friends and I were mesmerized by the giant Japanese Monsters that filled our TV screens. I'd like to dedicate this article to the amazing people who I have met and will continue to meet on my toy-collecting journey.



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KING KONG VS

GODZILLA

BY FORREST J ACKERMAN

King Kong is back & don't ask how because nobody knows. The same way Dracula, done to death by wooden stake or silver bullet or by the dawn's early light, still manages to put in one more ghast appearance. The same way Frankenstein's monster survives fatal falls & futile boilings. The same way Im-ho-tep & Kharis, crumbling to Egyptian dust at the count of nine, manage to rise at the count of ten.

So, ladies & gentlemen, in this corner, weighing in at 55 million pounds – KING KONG!

And in this corner, his more slender contender for the crown of King of the Monsters – GODZILLA (only 44 million pounds, give or take a fraction of an ounce, in his stalking feet). Of course, Godzilla, the long-tailed lizard who waddles upright, does have a certain advantage in his nasty breath – it's fiery and radioactive.

KONG COMES BACK

King Kong, who as every schoolboy from here to Pellucidar knows, died at the base of the Empire State Bldg. in 1933; but in 1963 he is mysteriously found alive about 62 miles south of Bougainville in the Solomon Islands, specifically, not on Skull Island, but on Faro Island. This is not the son of Kong, mind you, nor even his grandson, but the granddaddy of 'em all, the one & only original & indestructible KONG.

One nite during a thunder & lightning storm on Faro Island, a roar mightier than even the thunder is heard. Kong appears & allays the fears of the islanders by eliminating an oceanic enemy which had been troubling them: the natives had been growing restless over a 164' octopus which had been capsizing too many of their canoes, then putting the squeeze play on the damp warriors who get dumped.

As a reward for ridding the islanders of the menace of the super-octopus, Kong is treated to some fine red vintage Faro wine, which makes him groggy. While Kong sleeps, some daring individuals bind the king on a huge raft & by cargo boat tow him towards Japan.

**BELIEVED DEAD FOR 30 YEARS, THE MIGHTIEST MONSTER OF THEM ALL – KING KONG – IS
RESURRECTED BY JAPANESE FILMMAKERS TO DO BATTLE WITH... GODZILLA!**



As the raft approaches its destination, the drugging effects of the drink wear off and Kong awakens to find himself a prisoner. As this does not suit his temperament, he struggles mightily to be free & succeeds in bursting his bonds.

Causing miniature tidal waves to precede him, he wades ashore.

Godzilla, who has been on ice up in the Arctic since last we saw him, thaws out of his iceberg apartment when a nuclear submarine gets too nosy. After sighting sub & sinking same, with unerring homing instincts Godzilla heads south from the Bering Straits and, skirting up the coasts of Kamchatka and the Chishima Islands, he enters Japan

GODZILLA moves south!
KING KONG moves north!


Natives along their path move OUT.

They nearly meet, much to the distress of the citizenry thereabouts, in Tokyo. Needless to say, Tokyo comes in for another spectacular beating.

But the final knock-down-drag-'em out battle of the behemoths is reserved for a spot where they can really throw their weight (a combined 99 million pounds) around. With the wild animal's instinctive sense of danger, each feels that a deadly enemy is nearby & they seek each other out & meet at Lake Chuzenji in Nikko. After a preliminary sparring match they head for the summit of Mt. Fuji itself & it is there that the climax of the picture (running time: 99 mins.) takes place.

In the words of the producers: "Their roars & bellows rend the air & the ground shakes as in an earthquake as we witness the gruesome & frightening scene of the 2 largest monsters in existence gripped in a life & death struggle."

Does King Kong best his saurian adversary or does Godzilla prevail over the mammoth ape?

MONSTERS lets you in on a secret: 2 endings have been filmed & if you see KING KONG vs. GODZILLA in Japan, Hong Kong or some Oriental sector of the world, Godzilla wins! On the other hand, in the USA & England, for instance, Kong wins! 

GODZILLA

STILL THE KING OF THE MONSTERS AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

The Ishiro Honda & Eiji Tsuburaya Years, 1954-1969

by August Ragone

For over a half-century, Godzilla has been one of the most famous monsters of all time—he is the king, after all—an undebatable pop culture symbol or legend to millions across the globe, long before what would become known as *anime* existed. To those outside of Japan, Godzilla—and the other Japanese monsters that followed in his wake—introduced a modern, benevolent, and allied Japan to Western moviegoers. Many of those who grew up with the debate of these films during the 1950s through the 1970s were, in turn, inspired to become filmmakers, artists, and writers themselves—or went on to a larger appreciation of Japan as a whole, via the arts, culture, and history. In this regard, Godzilla could be looked upon as a proxy Cultural Ambassador to its former adversaries after the end of the Pacific War—eventually becoming a part of American pop culture as well.

While the original series of 15 Godzilla films were produced from 1954 through 1975, and a revival in 1984 kick-started another two-decade cycle resulting in another 13, the King of the Monsters has solely remained a Japanese franchise. In spite of several Hollywood attempts—and mishires—including Hanna-Barbera Productions' cartoon series in 1978, and the Roland Emmerich debacle of 1998, Godzilla has failed to make the transition from Japanese to American Cinema. Why? Perhaps, I believe, the attraction to these films—beyond the visceral monster action—is that they are, themselves, *Japanese*. In essence, it's their own "Japaneseness" that makes Godzilla films tick. So, if filmmakers take the *Japanese spirit* out of Godzilla, the

monster ceases to be *Godzilla*.

With that being said, and regardless of all the revivals, remakes, and leaps in motion picture technology, the Godzilla films which have left the biggest and most memorable impact on our collective consciousness—both in Japan and the West—are the original series produced by Toho Motion Picture Company during the Golden Age of Japanese Cinema. Looking back, we can see the strength upon which these original films were made, and how they have now fallen into the category of timeless classics.

The undeniable greatness of the original Godzilla films rests squarely on the

shoulders of the dedicated filmmakers and actors who made them during Toho's greatest period, represented by producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, director Ishiro Honda, screenwriter Shinichi Sekizawa, composer Akira Ifukube, visual effects wizard Eiji Tsuburaya, and the man in the grey rubber suit: Haruo Nakajima—who brought the monster to life in 12 of the 15 original films. They will never be matched for their combined efforts in creating some of the most-beloved monster films of all time: even those not starring Godzilla gasp! including *Rodan*, *The Mysterians*, *Varan*, *Mothra*, and *The War of the Gargantuas*.

The popular legend has it that a young Japanese movie producer, on a plane back from his failure to get a co-production with Indonesia off the ground, dreamed up a replacement film in order to save his career. Looking out over the ocean he imagined a great sea beast rising from the depths on a rampage of destruction. Upon returning to Toho Studios, Tomoyuki Tanaka (1910-1997) was able to sell his bosses on his story, "Giant Monster From 20,000 Miles Under the Sea", inspired by the Japanese box office success of Warner Brother's *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953). Tanaka's monster movie was put onto the fast track for development, even though a film like this had never been attempted before in Japan. Executive Producer Iwano Mori (1899-1979), a champion in developing special visual effects, was confident that the studio's trick photography master, Eiji Tsuburaya (1901-1970), could bring the monster to celluloid reality.

Working under the provisional title of





"Project G" (for "Glam"), with top-secret status imposed by Mori, Tanaka hired popular fiction writer Shigeru Kayama (1906-1975) to draft a story, which would later become a screenplay. Originally, action director Senkichi Taniguchi was assigned to the project, but because of his success with the special effects war picture, *Eagle Of The Pacific* (1953), director Ishiro Honda (1911-1993) was given *Godzilla*. Screenwriter Takao Murota (b.1910) and Honda overhauled Kayama's story, taking a pseudo-documentary approach, shot by Mikio Naruse's regular cameraman Masao Tamai, and setting the story in the real world. Honda and Murota paid careful attention in creating the characters, which were the antithesis of the cardboard types that usually populated such motion pictures, and Honda underlined this by going with an A-List cast.

The young leads were played by newcomer Akira Takarada (*Samurai Saga*), Akihiko Hirata (*Samurai II*), and Momoko Kocchi (*Saturday Angel*). One popular story asserts that Hirata was originally set to play the young salvage officer, Hideto Ogata, while Takarada was set to play the eye-patched scientist, Daisuke Serizawa; but after discussions with the actors, their roles were switched. The great Takashi Shimura (*The Mystery Men*), a favorite actor

of Akira Kurosawa, was tapped by Honda to play the role of the wizened paleontologist, Dr. Yamane. While a new and rebellious composer, Akira Ifukube (*The Quiet Duel*), who was advised by his contemporaries not to accept the job, provided the memorably haunting and unique score (as well as providing the voice for the monster, by rubbing a contrabass string with a coarse glove). Since 1954, Ifukube's *Godzilla* themes have gone on to become as synonymous to *Godzilla* as the James Bond Theme is to 007.

In order to work out advance problems with the effects sequences, hundreds of storyboards were super-used by Tsuburaya and Mori, and it was determined that Stop Motion photography would be far too time consuming to meet the projected release date mandated by Toho (already weary of *Seven Samurai*'s long production schedule). The monster would still be "animated," but rather by young character actor and stuntman, Haruo Nakajima (*Eagle Over the Pacific*), in a prosthetic suit crafted by Teizo Yoshinaka and his crew. For the destruction scenes, Tsuburaya supervised





retroactively understood as the sets of atomic bombings of Tokyo in 1945 made. These halfhearted attempts a tradition of the *Yakuza* (gang) disaster movie), and remains the two irremovable elements to this day. Unleashed on November 3, 1954, *Godzilla Raids Again* became the second film run, marking Ishirō Honda's first "Monster Picture" (in English, "World")—and a monster was born!

While *Godzilla* was quickly destroyed by Dr. Serizawa's "Oxygen Destroyer", a chemical substance that removes all oxygen from water, Dr. Yanojima warned, "If they continue to experiment with nuclear weapons, there may one day appear another *Godzilla* in the world." *Godzilla Raids Again* (1955) appeared within just a few months after the release of *Godzilla*. In the first of Toho's "Monster vs. Monster" epics, this production explains that the titular beast is a different creature of the same species, not a reincarnation of the original *Godzilla*—now pitted against the violent, spike-laden quadruped, Angilas (or *Anguirus*). Haruo Nakajima returned to play *Godzilla* solo this time, with his co-star actor, Katsumi Tezuka playing Angilas.

Unfortunately, the plot structure of *Godzilla Raids Again* is odd for such a format, as the monsters are introduced and battle to the death in the picture's first half, while the remainder of the running time centers on the military's efforts to locate and dispose of *Godzilla*, led by airman Tajima (Yoshio Tsuchiya, Rikichi from Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*). More than anything, and certainly more than



CLASH OF THE TITANS: A still (left) and the Japanese movie poster (above) for KING KONG VS. GODZILLA

its predecessor, the picture is essentially a melodrama, and a rather awkward and slow one at that. The picture's main characters Tsukioka (Hiroshi Koizumi) and Kobayashi (Minoru Chiaki, Heihachi from *Seven Samurai*) seem unimportant, barely sketched out, and the film's subplots are too mawkish for this type of picture, more resembling the standard B-films of the 1950s rather than the major release it portended to be—despite the cast featuring two of the prominent players from *Seven Samurai*. Most of this could be leveled on

the director, Motoyoshi Oda, who only had one other fantasy film to his credit, *The Invisible Avenger* (1954), and a rather routine screenplay (by Shigeaki Hidaka and Takeo Murata).

One of the most misunderstood and maligned films in the *Godzilla* series, *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (1962) had a most bizarre and unfortunate genesis. But that's show biz for you. In the late 1950s, visual effects master Willis O'Brien (*King Kong*) found no luck in pitching his latest idea, "King Kong vs. Frankenstein", to studios,



but it did catch the attention of former Universal producer John Beck. Beck took on the project, but also found a tough going until he came to Toho Studios, who were interested in a return vehicle for Godzilla (and another spectacle for their 30th Anniversary roster, which included Hiroshi Inagaki's *Chushingura*). Beck was able to convince Toho to foot the entire licensing fees for *King Kong*, which amounted to 88 million yen (approximately \$250,000 USD) in 1962, which was three times the cost of the average Toho production at the time. Toho also retained the rights to the character for five years.

Keeping the budget restrictions in mind, director Honda, effects director Tsuburaya, and writer Sekizawa envisioned an entertainment picture along the lines of *Mogura* (1961), and screenwriting began in earnest. Cast in the lead was popular actor and comedian Tachio Takashimizu (*Emperor Meiji and The Russo-Japanese War*, 1957) and was paired with Yu Fujiki (*Sannaru H. Duet At Ichijoji Temple*, 1958), another comic genius (who was the uncredited "Eiko Maru" radio operator in the original *Godzilla*). Actresses Mie Hama (*The Merciless Tiger*, 1961) and Akiko Wakabayashi (*Ukiyo*, 1961) became superstars in their own right, and shared the distinction of becoming "Bond Girls" in *Two Out of Three* (1967). Rodan's star, Kenji Sahara, plays Hama's inventor boyfriend in a supporting role. Mr. Taki, the greedy advertising executive, was played by Ichiro Aizawa (*Young Blood Is Boiling*, 1947), a physical comedian who was beloved by audiences as the "Japanese Chaplin".

The infamous Kong suit was not up to par for what Toho's visual effects department could accomplish, especially in light of the rather effective Abominable Snowman in Honda's *Half Human* (1955), reportedly due to the budget cutbacks imposed in high fees in securing the rights to the character. Even so, two suits were constructed, as well as several puppets—and Tsuburaya, legend has it, wanted this incarnation of Kong to appear comical. On the flipside, Godzilla appears more powerful than before, and established the "classic" look of the 1960s. While the miniature sets were as elaborate as ever, with mountains and rivers, Tsuburaya chose to shoot much the action at normal speed, which doesn't always allow these characters the illusion of mass and size. Tsuburaya also permitted



soit actors Haruo Nakajima and Shoichi Hirose to freely choreograph their own fight scenes.

Honda's version is fast, furious, and entertaining as all get-out, and was never intended to be taken as seriously as the original *Godzilla*. Sekizawa wrote a satire on the rise of rampant commercialization in Japan, which is not apparent in Beck's version, and he apparently never understood it. Instead, Beck decided to "improve" the film—which included deleting Ifukube's score because it sounded too "Asian" (re-using cues from older Universal films, such as *Creature From the Black Lagoon* and *Frankenstein*

Meets the Wolf Man), and adding footage with American character actors delivering colorful commentary—and helmed by actor-turned-director Thomas Montgomery (*The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, 1961). O'Brien eventually filed suit against Beck for stealing his idea, but couldn't afford to pursue. He passed away before *King Kong vs. Godzilla* was released in the States. Both versions—which each end in a tie—were box office hits in their respective countries, but it seems as though Beck was the most terrible monster of all.

Considered the best of the original *Godzilla* series, *Mothra vs. Godzilla* (1964) is the first cross-over of two

separate screen characters from previous pictures. Sekizawa's imaginative script is fast-paced yet richly detailed, delicately tracing a number of human stories through the grander web of its plot. The monster scenes, while plentiful, do not preclude characterization and character development, while Honda's swift pacing and sense of scale do not desert him as he guides the interplay between the film's three lead actors, Akira Takarada (*Godzilla*), Yuriko Hoshi (*Warring Clans*), and Hiroshi Koizumi (*Late Chrysanthemums*). Honda also drew top-notch performances from two of his regulars—Yoshiyumi Tajima, as the greedy Kumayama, pawn of the opportunistic Torahata, essayed by the versatile Kenji Sahara (*Rodan*).

Takeo Kita's art direction, from the ordinary to the oversized sets, he created to bring the "Little Beauties" (Yumi and Emi Ito) to reality, is superb. Akira Watanabe's visual effects art direction well displays the ambition of the production, and the artist surpasses himself with the many eye-filling miniature sets designed for glorious Tohoscope widescreen photography, helmed by Sadamasa Arikawa. *Mothra* vs. *Godzilla* ranks among the finest for Tsuburaya—the film's color palette is brilliant. This is carried over into the live action sequences of the film, shot by Hajime Koizumi. Koizumi, whose live action lensing is at its best, fully exploits the Tohoscope format in this film—complimented by one of the very best Ifukube scores of all time.

The production's visual effects undoubtedly represent some of Tsuburaya's most ambitious and diverse undertakings for a monster film. He and his team muster and deploy nearly every technique at their disposal to bring the monsters and the miniature landscapes to life. This may well be one of Tsuburaya's most miniature-filled monster films, aside from *Mothra* (1961) and *The War of the Gargantuas* (1966), featuring a virtual panacea of military hardware—both real and imagined—jets, bombers, helicopters, tanks, and warships *ad infinitum*. Meanwhile, the film's monsters, Godzilla, the adult Mothra and



its twin larvae, get the "star treatment" from Teizo Toshimitsu and

his workshop. Godzilla, form-fitting to accommodate Haruo Nakajima, is considered one of the best incarnations of the monster, and certainly one of the most popular of all time. While numerous incarnations of Mothra were used to bring the creature to life, it is the nearly 6'-long, wire-operated mechanical marionette adult (whose many intricate functions were manipulated via radio control), with a massive 12' wingspan, that is simply one of the most magnificent on screen.

Ghidorah, The Three-Headed Monster or *Three Giant Monsters: The Greatest Battle on Earth* was planned to feature all three of Toho's biggest monster stars (Godzilla, Rodan, and Mothra), who would

be "teamed up" to fight the interplanetary menace, *Ghidorah* (or "King Ghidorah" in the Japanese version). Perhaps the most inspired creature the studio ever conceived, King Ghidorah was the idea of scenarist Sekizawa, who described the winged monster as having "three heads, two tails, and a metallic roar like a bell." Designed by Akira Watanabe, the impressive King Ghidorah was faithfully realized by the prosthetic crew in Toho's Special Arts Department.

Sekizawa's screenplay is more fantasy-oriented, centering on an Eastern princess (a descendant of aliens) marked for assassination, and written to appeal to a broader audience than the previous films. Honda said to late author Guy Tucker (*Age of the Gods*), "When I make a monster film, I never think that it will be for children. I want to imagine and express a story [to a wide audience], but it's always children



who are the most interested."

Model-turned-actor, Yosuke Natsuki, who had just come off of Honda's *Dogora*, *The Space Monster* (1964), top-lines the cast as Detective Shindo. Natsuki would later go on to play Professor Hayashida in *Return of Godzilla* (1984). The spunky and in-demand Yuriko Hoshi (*Mothra vs. Godzilla*), stars as Shindo's sister, an investigative reporter. Hiroshi Koizumi (*Mothra vs. Godzilla*) once again plays the scientist, geologist Professor Murai. Akiko Wakabayashi (*King Kong vs. Godzilla*) plays Princess Salno, the character who ties all of the others together, and who believes that she is an alien. The assassin, Maltress, was to be played by Yoshio Tsuchiya (*Seven Samurai*), but was held over on Kurosawa's *Red Beard*, and was replaced by character actor, Hisaya Ito (XXXX).

Many of Tsuburaya's visual effects for the picture are thrilling, such as the birth of King Ghidorah, its awe-inspiring destruction of Yokohama and Tokyo, and the first battle between Godzilla and Rodan. But the increasing anthropomorphic behavior (especially in the Monster Summit scene) lessens the overall impact of the film—if not the entertainment value. Honda said, "I was hesitant to let Mothra act as the mediator... I felt that the monsters...were far too humanized." Even still, backed by Ifukube's wonderful fairy tale score (including a memorable song from *The Peanuts*), Tsuburaya's grand and sweeping visual effects magic, and the magnificent King Ghidorah, help to make *Ghidorah: The Three-Headed Monster* one of the more memorable entries in the entire series.

In May of 1965, Henry G. Saperstein of United Productions of America announced that he had signed a five-picture deal with Toho that would see films produced with the inclusion of American actors, instead of said thespians being added into the films as an afterthought (as in *Godzilla*, *King of the Monsters*). The first production was *Frankenstein Conquers The World*, featuring Nick Adams in the starring role,

and was followed by *Invasion of the Astero-Monster*, released in the US as *Monster Zero*, featuring Godzilla, Rodan, and King Ghidorah used by aliens as their pawns to conquer the Earth. Adams (1931-1968) was a likeable television star with a hit series under his belt, *The Rebel*, but was finding it hard to secure work because of Hollywood politics, and jumped at the opportunity to star in these Japanese films. Well-liked by Toho's cast and crew, Adams' outstanding mark on *Monster Zero*

stunningly beautiful actress, Kumi Mizuno (b.1937) plays the X-tie who falls from computer-directed-grace by loving Glenn—rumors to the thespians' love affair, the break-up of Adams' marriage, and the connection to his untimely death are still hotly debated to this day.

Akira Kubo plays the acerbic investigator Tetsuo Torii, to perfection—cast against type from his self-assured and straightforward roles in films like *Managata* (1963) and *Deviant* (1968).

The infectious personality of Adams, coupled with Honda's witty direction, miraculously pulls the cast together. Honda and Sekizawa's clever (and often humorous) scene transitions are spot-on and propel the film along at a swift clip. Tsuburaya's visual effects were spectacular for the time and were beautifully underlined by Ifukube's rare and effective score (one of his most emotional and atmospheric).

The production of *Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster* in 1966 marked big changes in the Visual Effects Department at Toho, because in late 1965, with contracts were ending and Tsuburaya was pulling people and resources over to his own effects company, Tsuburaya Productions (co-founded by Toho producer Sanezumi Fujimoto). Since Honda and Tsuburaya were busy working on *The War Of The Gargantuas*, Tanaka handed the next *Godzilla* project over to popular action film director Jun Fukuda, who previously helmed the sci-fi thriller *Secret Of The Telegian* (1960) and the hit action-comedy *100 Shoi/100 Killed* (1965). America's Rankin/Bass, famous for its puppet animated television specials produced in Japan (such as *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*), was shopping studios to take on a live-action feature film, based on their own *King Kong Show* cartoon series, produced by Toei Animation. The first screenplay, by Sekizawa ("King Kong vs. Eibrah: Operation Robinson-Crusoe"), was rejected, but negotiations continued and further treatments were offered to Rankin/



is one of best qualities in a film brimming with bright spots, and he steals the show with his self-written dialogue.

The on-screen rapport between the Astronauts, played by Adams and Akira Takarada (who starred in the first *Godzilla*), was that of old chums, and is extremely believable—even though they only knew each other for a few months before shooting the film. Tsuchiya's icy and robotic "Controller" was an elaboration of his similar role in Honda's *The Mysterians* (1957), and created the X-tie language uttered in the Japanese version. Toho's



Bess (who was eventually produced as *King Kong Escapes* in 1967). While Toho was creating new monsters, there were no new Godzilla projects on the fast track. But Tanaka felt that the Godzilla series needed a fresh direction and thought that it was time to go after the teenage market with the very same formula that made films such as *The Young Guns* (starring Yuzo Kayama) so popular. There was also a trendy interest in Hawaii and the South Pacific, reflected in Japanese pop songs and movies of the mid-1960s, and Tanaka thought that this could also be exploited in the screenplay for "Kong Kong vs. Ebirah." Tanaka ordered the project into production, substituting King Kong with Godzilla, in a slightly revised screenplay entitled *Godzilla-Ebirah: Mothra: Big Duel in the South Seas* (the original Japanese release title).

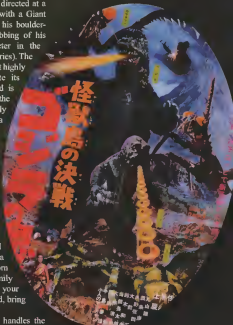
The cast is top-lined by leading man Akira Takarada, who had previously starred in *Monster Zero* (1965), playing the is-he-isn't-he master thief. As the beautiful escapee, 29-year-old Kumi Mizuno was a last-minute marquee-value replacement for 19-year-old starlet Noriko Takahashi (the dancing girl in *Frankenstein Conquers The World*), who originally was cast in the part—and replaced after principal photography began. The driving electric guitar and jazz-infused soundtrack was composed by Masaru Sato (*Yojimbo*), scoring his second Godzilla film (the first was *Godzilla Raids Again* in 1955) was quite a departure from Akira Ifukube's bombastic marches. The lush photography was in the hands of Kazuo Yamada, who shot the majority of Hiroshi Inagaki's memorable films, including *Chushingura* (1962).

Fukuda approached this as a pure entertainment movie, with a fast-paced story that also weaves in a Youth Movie with James Bondian bistrionics, and a band of young people swept up into the action, with whom the target audience could identify. It is quite apparent that little was revised in the changing of the central monster from Kong to Godzilla, because of the odd Kong-like ticks given to Godzilla in this picture—his attention directed at a beautiful woman, his battle with a Giant Condor and a Jet Squadron, his boulder-throwing antics, and the rubbing of his nose (aka Kayama's character in the aforementioned *Young Guns* series). The colorful film is an unusual, but highly enjoyable, adventure—despite its relatively lower budget—and is one of the most underrated of the 1960s entries. (It's also the only Godzilla film to open with a Go-Go Contest!).

Following in the footsteps of *Godzilla vs. The Sea Monster*, action director Fukuda refines his take on the Godzilla series with this absolutely underrated gem, *Son Of Godzilla* (1967), which is arguably his best genre film. While it is not to be taken seriously, and wasn't intended to be, *Son Of Godzilla* is a seriously wonderful popcorn adventure for the whole family that urges you to leave your cynicism at home and, instead, bring your sense of wonder.

This time around, Fukuda handles the

material with much more confidence on display than in *Godzilla vs. The Sea Monster*, which is further polished by the veteran ensemble of thespians on-tap, including Akira Kubo (*Throne of Blood*), Akihiko Hirata (*Sanjuro*), Yoshio Tsuchiya (*Red Bears*) and Kenji Sabara (*Chushingura*). Working together as a seasoned troop, the actors really sell the film, and make it almost...believable.





In order to show a great contrast in size between Godzilla and Minilla, the towering former baseball great, Seiji Onaka (who had a small, but featured role in Honda's *Rodan*), was tapped for the role of Godzilla, while seasoned "Little Person", Ma-chan, essayed the titular Son of Godzilla. Tsuburaya's regular monster actor, Haruo Nakajima, was relegated to Godzilla's water scenes (using the suit from the previous film, looking worse for wear), since the new costume was fitted specifically for the taller Onaka. But, when Onaka broke his fingers after completing only a few scenes, the equally tall Hiroshi Sekita (who played Sanda, the Brown Gargantuan, in *The War of the Gargantuas*) was called in, and completed the film as Godzilla.

Like Fukuda, Arikawa's visual effects also reveal a much more assured hand, and the effects are a marked improvement over *Godzilla vs. The Sea Monster*, especially in regards to matte paintings and optical photography. What is astonishing about *Son of Godzilla* is the incredible wire-operated-marionettes in the film—just in a scene with the three monster mantises there were approximately 30 wires (10 per mantis), fifteen operators (five per mantis), all working in unison to make each insect come to life (not including the radio control operators to manipulate the mandibles on each of the creatures). When Godzilla appears on-screen with the insects, there are even more wire operators employed in the scenes—all up in the studio rafters hoping not to get tangled up. Credit goes

to wire-operations master Fumio Nakadai, who certainly had his work cut out for him on this film. Let's not get started on the 20¢ wire-operated, mammoth spider...

All of this complex visual effects work, coupled with the beautiful cinematography by Kazuo Yamada (*Santriai Rebellions*), shot on location in Guam—as well as on incredibly huge soundstage sets in Tokyo—and underlined with a marvelous score by Masaru Sato (*Yojimbo*), add up to make *Son of Godzilla* superior family entertainment. Really.

Finally, at the end of the 1960s, it was inevitable that there would be a Toho version of Universal's monster parades, such as *House of Frankenstein*, and the result was *Charge of the Monsters*, promoted overseas as the more familiar,

daring-do, flying saucers, all-out war, and ethereal aliens.

While *Destroy All Monsters* was originally intended to be Godzilla's swan song due to the decline of moviegoers and the sharp rise of television, Toho decided to follow the lead by Toei Studios' successful "Toei Cartoon Festival" (Toei Manga Matsuri) format where a theatrical matinee program of live-action and animated shorts was framed around a feature-length film. Toho decided to re-launch their Godzilla franchise in a similar fashion, issued in a series dubbed *The Toho Champion Festival*, with a new film once a year—supplementing the rest of the year with re-releases of previous films cut to a shorter running time. The first of these festival packages, featuring *March of the Monsters* (aka *Godzilla's Revenge*), premiered on December 20, 1969.

Taking a cue from Daiei Studios' successful Gamera films—which feature children as the main characters—writer

Sekizawa and director Honda decided to set this film in our real world, where Godzilla is a movie monster, and focus on the story of working-class kid who must fend for himself while both of his parents work to make ends meet. Plagued by the school bully, Ichiro Miki (Tomonori Yazaki) retreats into a *kyōto*

via dreamworld to escape reality, and is able to travel to Monster Island where he befriends the son of Godzilla, Minilla. But even there, Minilla has a bully of his own in the form of an ogre-ish monster named Gahra. Meanwhile, in the real world, a pair of bank robbers on the lam, about Ichiro, who must bond with Minilla so they



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can both defeat their respective oppressors.

The monster scenes for the film are padded out with footage from previous films such as *Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster* and *Son of Godzilla*—both set on islands—but it seems to make sense, since Ichiro is recalling the battles from films he had already seen. While listed as Visual Effects Supervisor, Eiji Tsuburaya was actually on the road, shooting footage for an exhibit in the Mieubuchi Pavilion being built for Expo '70 in Osaka. Ichiro Honda pulled double-duty in this film by handling both the live action and visual effects scenes, assisted by suit actor Haruo Nakajima, and Tsuburaya's assistant, Teruyoshi Nakano, and the rest of Tsuburaya's visual effects team.

Even with the short running time of *Godzilla's Revenge*, Honda and Sekizawa manage to address social issues such as urban pollution, backkey kids, bullying, and child abduction—all wrapped in a monster-filled *kara-oka* package, and still are able to make an entertaining children's film in the process, which doesn't pander to its audience. But, while the die was cast in bringing Godzilla back for children, these

films would only continue for five more films, *Godzilla vs. Hedorah* (1971), *Godzilla vs. Gigan* (1972), *Godzilla vs. Megalon* (1973), *Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla* (1974), and *Terror of Mechagodzilla* (1975), before the Big G would take a bit of a retirement. Of course, you can't keep a good monster down, and Godzilla returned for another 13 films—creating a whole new generation of fans—between 1984 and 2004, with some American-made opus, everyone seems to have forgotten, sandwiched in-between.

Now, another American-produced film is being threatened upon us; will this be the end-all, be-all Godzilla film that every fan has always wanted? Or will it wind-up being another complete misfire? Only time will tell. In any case, whether made here or in Japan, there is no doubt that Godzilla will be returning, in one form or another, for future generations to come. In the meantime, we still have the treasure chest of films made by Honda, Tsuburaya, Tanaka, and others, which will certainly keep entertaining viewers well into the future. Because, above all else, we must remember that Godzilla is still the King of the Monsters!



August Ragone is the author of *Eiji Tsuburaya: Master of Monsters*, and can be found online at www.augustragone.blogspot.com

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THE ORIGINAL "GODZILLA"
HARUO NAKAJIMA
THE MAN OF A THOUSAND MONSTERS



Haruo Nakajima, Godzilla himself, the Dean of Monster Suit Actors, was born on January 1, 1929, the son of a butcher and the third boy in a family of five siblings. Raised in Yamagata Prefecture near the coast of the Sea of Japan, Nakajima was extremely athletic as a child and became known as a champion swimmer and diver as a teen, which would prove to be a great background for him in his later career in playing movie monsters.

In 1943, his eldest brother assumed control of the family business and moved to Yokosuka, a city that was the headquarters of the Japanese Imperial Navy, and after the War became the home of the United States Seventh Fleet. At the age of 14 he enlisted as a pilot-trainee in the Imperial Navy Air Service. Japan's defeat saved him from being sent out to die as a Kamikaze pilot.

After returning home following the surrender, he took on a few odd jobs, including truck driving in Yokohama for the U.S. Occupation Forces, where he was ironically nicknamed "Kamikaze Nakajima." A bit of a daredevil, his seemingly reckless driving ended up seeing his services being "no longer required" he already felt uneasy about the job, since he was working for blackmarketeers. He was happy to go.

In 1947, he saw an ad for an Actor's School in the newspaper. He was 18 years old. During the late 1940s he found himself relegated mostly to being a background player, sometimes part of a horde, usually cut down by the top-billed samurai. In 1949, at the age of 20, he was featured in a street brawl in the classic Kurosawa film *Stray Dog*. Unfortunately, his scene was cut from the final picture.

After severe film industry labor disputes at Toho Studios in 1950, he went union, but the roles were still nothing more than walk-ons until he got the casting call on Ishiro Honda's WW2 epic *Eagle of the Pacific* in 1953, which changed the course of his life and career. A scene for the film required a pilot, engulfed in flames, to crawl out from his burning plane and fall onto the tarmac of an aircraft carrier. The director asked for volunteers. Nakajima stepped forward.

In doing this scene, he performed the first fire-stunt in a Japanese film—long before there was anything akin to safety gear or safety procedures. They actually set him on fire; he was told to keep acting until they called "Cut", and the crew would put him out. Nakajima didn't flinch. His bravado led to a role that would secure Nakajima's place in the pantheon of monster film icons. *Godzilla*.

In addition to his monster movie work at Toho, Mr. Nakajima also played several monsters on the Ultraman television series, produced by Tsuburaya Productions in 1966, and helped to start a new generation of monster suit actors. After playing a monster squid and monster crab in Ishiro Honda's *Space Amoeba* (1970), Mr. Nakajima played Godzilla one last time in Jun Fukuda's *Godzilla vs. Gigan* (1972).

After all of Toho's contracted actors were let go in the early 1970s, some were still employed by the company in other capacities. Mr. Nakajima became the manager of the lot's Bowling Alley, before he retired as a company man. He recently published his



© Chris Mirjahangir



autobiography, *"A Monster Life: Haruo Nakajima, The Original Godzilla Actor"* (Yosensha Publishing, 2010).

The last of his generation, Mr. Nakajima has that real Samurai Spirit. But, while being a real tough guy, he is also one of the most laid back and easy-going men to have ever worked under the rubber. A true gentleman and wholly deserving of the title, King of the Monsters!

Famous Monsters. Mr. Nakajima, when you first started out in films, you weren't doing man-in-costume work. You were actually doing quite a few walk-ons, small parts in dramas, and stunt work in action and samurai movies. You even played one of the bandits in Akira Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* (1954)...

Haruo Nakajima. I would demonstrate for you if I had a sword!

FM. Somebody get this man a sword! Now, not that you haven't been asked this question a thousand times, but what was it like working on the original *Godzilla* (1954)?

HN. It was a really difficult job, very impossible. After the first one it was difficult. After the second one, it was more difficult. [laughs] I was usually in the suit for about an hour at a time. It could get up to 50C (122F) in the suit, and we didn't have any air conditioners in the studio. There would usually be large blocks of



ice for me to go and stand next to. This would cool us down, but not for very long. And much of the shooting was done in summer. It would even rain inside the sound stage.

FM. It would rain inside the sound stage?

HN. All the studio people up in the ceiling with the wires and lights and everything would sweat so much it would rain on the staff inside the studio. [laughs and pretends to wipe water off of his shoulders]

FM. With the suit being so thick and heavy, and working under those conditions, it must have been physically difficult for you—especially since the suit was made in such a way that it gave you severe abrasions.

HN. There were times when I had injuries or troubles on set, but I never complained. Actors don't cry—you just do your job until it's finished!

FM. What are your impressions of effects director Eiji Tsuburaya, who relied on you as his primary actor for the monster movies he helmed?

HN. Tsuburaya was a very shy and reserved man on set. Most of the direction that he gave me for the performances was "I trust you to do it. Do what you feel. I leave it all up to you." And that's the way he was for most of the films we worked on together after [Godzilla].

FM. Aside from *Godzilla*, one of your most unusual roles was that of an Invisible Man in Motoyoshi Oda's *The Invisible Avenger* (1954). You doubled all of the invisible scenes for star Seisaburo Kawazu, who just did his dialogue scenes. And you actually played a brief scene as another invisible man who is run over in the film. How were the transformation scenes accomplished?

HN. I would be standing in front of a black curtain and then they



would put black all over my skin so I would be very difficult to see. [touches his face] Black. [touches his arm] Black. [touches his leg] Black. Everything was black. The only way you could tell it was me was through the eyes.

FM. In *Godzilla Raids Again* (1955), you again played Godzilla, while Katsumi Tezuka, who was your stand-in on *Godzilla*, played your monster opponent, Angilas.

HN. Yes, Tezuka was the one wearing the Angilas suit. He was going to play more of *Godzilla* in the original movie, but got injured. So, there's only one scene of him in the movie, while I did the rest of the performance. And because of the problems with people in the costume it was decided that I would play Godzilla, solo, from that point on.

FM. You had an interesting story about similar mishaps on the sets of both *Godzilla Raids Again* and *Mothra vs. Godzilla* (1964).

HN. On *Godzilla Raids Again*, the crew pulled the wires too soon on the breakaway miniature of Osaka Castle, and they had to rebuild the entire miniature, which took several days. On *Mothra vs. Godzilla*, I accidentally fell into the miniature of Nagoya Castle, which had to be repaired. We shot the scene again, and I nailed it. The replacement of Osaka Castle cost 700,000 yen—my salary for the whole picture was only 20,000!

FM. *Rodan* (1956) is one of the best of Toho's early monster films, and is certainly well loved on both sides of the Pacific. In the film you play the titular role of Rodan. There was an accident involving the wire gag, when Rodan flies out of the water at the Salkai Bridge...

HN. There were seven or eight people pulling the wires to get me up in the air and I'd fly off in that direction [motions hand in an upward diagonal sweep]. During one of the rehearsals, the wires broke, so I went up, spun around; the wires twisting together and then they snapped. I dropped about ten meters onto the set.



© Chris Mirjahangir

Fortunately, the wings of the suit and the pool of the set broke my fall. Afterwards, Tsuburaya chided, "It's good that you didn't die, because I need you to finish the film." [laughs] And I said, "That's easy for you to say; I'm the one inside the costume." [laughs] But those things would sometimes happen.

FM. In *The Mysterians* (1957), you played both the Japan Self Defense Forces officer (as you had in *Rodan*) as well as one of the alien invaders. But more famously, you also played the Mysterians' giant robot, Mogera. As opposed to the heavy rubber of the Godzilla suits, Mogera was made from fiberglass to simulate the look of metal. Was this easier or more difficult than Godzilla?

HN. It was difficult, but easier to move in than Godzilla. Unlike Godzilla, there wasn't as much action in this film. Plus, the suit was much lighter, so it was one of the easier jobs I had. Like I said, there wasn't too much action in this film, just walking.

FM. You also portrayed the titular monster in *Varan: The Unbelievable* (1958). That was one of your more difficult experiences, wasn't it?

HN. There was a scene where there was a miniature truck that explodes underneath me. The area of the suit where the explosion occurred was very thin and I was burned pretty badly. But, of course, I didn't say anything. I just stood up and said to myself, "Well, that happened. I guess."

FM. A lot of people know Mothra as just a mechanical model that is manipulated with wires. But most people don't know that in the original 1961 film, one of the Mothra caterpillars was a 33-foot suit that required eight operators. Where were you in this suit?

HN. I was in the front of the suit, and behind me was Mr. Tezuka, and there were six more of us taking up the rear. Since the creature at this stage was a caterpillar, it was a difficult acting job, but conversely, since this suit was so huge, it was much easier to operate.

FM. You had a pretty funny story about Shoichi Hirose, who played Kong in *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (1963)...

HN. Let me tell you about that. Yes, Shoichi Hirose—who was a burly man—was given the role of King Kong. The funny thing was that when he went from his street clothes to the Kong suit, there wasn't much of a difference. [laughs]

FM. *Frankenstein Conquers the World* (1965) is a big favorite, because of the extensive monster scenes and the great fight at the climax. I really loved your performance as Baragon...

HN. Yes, there was a lot of action in that movie. They put me on wires for scenes where I would be jumping, but not quite flying. It was a fun show. But, the actor who played Frankenstein (Koji Furuhata) wasn't a professional actor at all, so I had to coach him in all of our scenes together. [laughs]

FM. *Monster Zero* (1965) was the second and last time you got to work with Nick Adams, the first being *Frankenstein Conquers the World*. What was he like?

HN. He was the only foreign actor who came to visit the visual effects set every day. When Nick showed up at the studio every morning, he would go around to visit everyone shouting, "Nippon Ichii" (Japan's number one!). He was a great guy.

FM. You've told me that your second favorite monster role, next to Godzilla, is Gaira, the Green Gargantua in *The War of the Gargantuas* (1966), correct?

HN. Yes, that's true. Part of that is because I got to use my real eyes—the mask allowed me to act using my eyes. Plus, the monster



was humanoid, so it was much easier to express myself. Mr. Hiroshi Sekita was in the brown suit, as Sunda. He was a second-degree black belt, so it was easy for him to learn the ropes very quickly. There were a lot of fight scenes using karate and judo—he knew karate, but I knew judo! [laughs]



FM. While there was a climactic battle in the water in *The War of the Gargantuas*, there was even more water scenes in *Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster* (1966), can you tell us a little about those?

HN. The set-up for the scenes would take about a week for each one. There was a tank that was about 50 meters across. Because

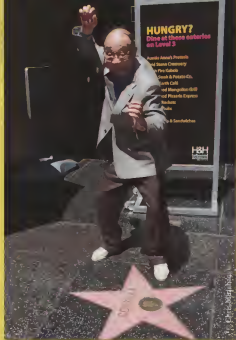
I had experience as a scuba diver, I was charged with coming up with a lot of the plans as to how to achieve the water shots. Once I did that, I would consult with Mr. Tsuburaya, who gave me a lot of freedom to create the sequences. He would say to me, "You're doing everything—just keep that in mind." [Laughs]

FM. In 1967, you got to play the other most famous monster in the world, Kong, in *King Kong Escapes*. I heard that it was one of your more difficult roles?

HN. That was one of the hardest roles for me because the arms of the character were much longer than my own; and I spent most of my time bent over, grabbing on to these sticks that would control the arms. It made the action sequences very difficult. Sometimes they would fall off or I'd accidentally let go. It was incredibly difficult also because the shape of the legs was very unnatural as well. [demonstrates the Kong walk for us]

FM. One of the more difficult opponents for Godzilla to grapple with must have been Hedorah, the Smog Monster, in *Godzilla vs. Hedorah* (1971). That huge Hedorah suit must have been difficult for Kenpachiro Satsuma (then known as Kengo Nakayama) to operate...

HN. Playing Hedorah was really quite easy. Anybody could do it. It's really just a big blob. I was the only one doing any of the acting in that film. I would run into Hedorah and have to bounce off of him, while he just stood there. [laughs] But, Mr. Nakayama



went on to play Godzilla himself in the 1980s and 1990s, because he learned a lot from me! [laughs]

FM. Mr. Nakajima, do you have any last words for our readers?

HN. Real actors don't complain. Real actors don't cry. Be a man, and just do your job until it's completed! [laughs]



Poster (p. 40) by Jolyon Jones

Born in Strood, England. First monster love was King Kong. All I saw of Godzilla for many years was the occasional photo in a book or magazine. No FM where I lived, alas, but searching for Godzilla led me to an internet in Japan in general. Luckily I made it over there as the gonzo pit for a student exchange program with an art college in Sagami, and returned as an English teacher for three years, where I met my future wife. Moved to America and have drawn kawaii for G-Fan, Gamera diva and Monsterpalooza.

Website: <http://www.jolyonbytes.com>

More about photographer Chris Mirjahangir at: <http://hohokangdom.com/resources/employees.htm>

Godzilla And Me

INSPIRATIONS FROM
THE KING OF THE MONSTERS

BY BOB EGGLETON



Follows. A visit to the 1964 New York World's Fair, I was hooked on dinosaurs. I'd never seen anything like the life-size mock ups of these great beasts of the past at the Sinclair Oil Pavillion. I was four years old.

Two years later, my mom got me a very inexpensive present that would ultimately change my life. It was the Ideal Toy *Godzilla* board game. She said, "It looked like a dinosaur, and I thought you'd like it." It was simple, and it made Monopoly look like Poker. But the game board and box cover sported the most amazing illustrations.

I also started drawing dinosaurs... and the elusive *Godzilla*. I think it was *King Kong vs. Godzilla* that I first saw in a theater. Around 1970, it was typical for *Godzilla* films to be shown as "matinees" at the local mom and pop theaters. We didn't have DVDs or VCRs. We had to wait until the films were shown at these venues, or on local TV. In this case, it was the Jerry Lewis Cinema nearby.

As it turns out, this is the film most fans claim they saw first, thanks to these nationwide matinees. I loved drawing this giant beast just as well as the dinosaurs. There was just some beguiling spell he cast, say, the *Rhedosaurus* from *The Beast from*

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Pathetic—

while still VERY cool—didn't quite
project.

As any movie fan will attest, there is a special love of the "One Sheet"—the movie poster, especially those with painted art on them. The poster that grabbed me was AIP's re-release of *Godzilla vs. The Smog Monster* in late 1973. It just jumped out at me, and I can

remember standing there, long after the most psychedelic of *Godzilla* films ended, ogling this poster. The *Godzilla* movie posters in the US have always been items many fans covet. Doing some backtracking, I found the incredible posters artist Reynold Brown painted for the films

Tops: The beautiful AIP release poster for *GODZILLA VS THE SMOG MONSTER* caught this 13 year old's eye well!

Left: Go-Go *Godzilla*? FM legend Basil Gogos' *Godzilla* Poster for Cinema Shares release of *GODZILLA VS THE BIONIC MONSTER*, which was changed to *GODZILLA VS THE COSMIC MONSTER*, also used on the cover to FM in 1977.



Godzilla vs. The Thing (1964) and *Destructo All Monsters* (1968). Brown is a legend among movie poster collectors. He worked long hours and often whole weekends to please AIP president Samuel Z. Arkoff. Then, in 1975, Ken Kelly's iconic cover to *FM#14* appeared to also feed fans' fervor.

Other Godzilla films I saw at the time included *Godzilla's Revenge* (1969) (much reviled by fans, but it took hold of me!) and *Monster Zero* (1965), the latter of which remains my favorite of the entire series.

Then along came the Marvel Comics Godzilla comic books in the late 70s. By this time, I could quote almost any Godzilla film. In the mid-to-late 70s, Cinema Shares released several Godzilla films, all with very cool, hand-painted posters: *Godzilla vs. Megalon* (*Gojira Tai Megaron* - 1976); *Godzilla vs. The Bionic Monster* (*Gojira Tai Meckagojira* - 1977) with its terrific Basil Gogos artwork, and *Godzilla on Monster Island* (*Gojira Tai Gaijigon* - 1978) with a terrific painting.

This was all fuel for the fire for me. People around me worried where all this "monster stuff" was going to get me. See, in the 1970's, FM was something you bought and made hid under your bed. It's also decided by that time that art was what I was good at; therefore, I was going to follow

it as a career: painting Sci-Fi, Fantasy, and Horror covers and their related artwork. I followed my instinct pretty well, attaining numerous awards—including 9 Hugo Awards—in the field. The Hugo is a sort of Oscar for Science Fiction/Fantasy. (As it so happens, Forry Ackerman, FM's co-founder and now editor-in-chief-in-the-great-beyond, won the first-ever Hugo Award in 1939.)

More personally, I looked at Godzilla as a friend.

In the 1990's, there was a Godzilla renaissance of sorts. Toho Pictures had begun producing a new series of films known as the "Heisei" series, which reimagined and re-focused Godzilla as a terrifying force of nature, with spectacular new special effects. With this came more comics, notably from Dark Horse Comics, and I was given the opportunity to do the covers for some of the issues. I even got to write Issue #16. About the same time, I started going to G-Fest and other monster-related conventions and connecting with a whole new fan base that I never really knew existed (this was all before the internet really kicked in). I developed some of the best friends I know to this day and went about collecting many of the toy figures produced in Japan, both old and new. It



Bob with the "sea-suit" from GODZILLA VS MEGAGUIRUS (2001) at Shinichi Wakasa's MONSTERS INC FX shop in Tokyo. Wakasa has carried on the tradition of Eiji Teuberaya of building monster suits for various Toho films.

was a passion to bind us all.

Around 1997, things really kicked into high gear with the US-made *Godzilla* movie. While the movie was anything but *Godzilla* as we knew him to be, the merchandising was the biggest stateside fans had ever seen. I even got a call from Random House to work on a variety of products for it, including a bunch of paperback books and two children's storybooks, *Who's Afraid of Godzilla* and *Godzilla Likes to Roar*. These books were a lot of fun to do, and 13 years on, I still get asked to autograph them.

I started connecting with *Godzilla* fans on a level I'd never thought possible. We all shared the same passion, it seemed, and I got to know friends in Japan as well. Via one connection, *Godzilla*-suit-maker Shinichi Wakasa commissioned me to do a painting for a t-shirt made by his company, MONSTERS INC. Wakasa-san became a fast and close friend. This resulted in my finally going to Japan and to "Monster Island" itself, wherein I not only visited Toho Studios, but became personal friends with then-president Shogo Tomiyama. I was invited to be a "running extra" in the film *Godzilla Against Mechagodzilla* (2002), which was an experience in itself; and I also got to see special effects shooting on the stages at Toho. It was a very special time. All the while, in the back of my head was that first Ideal Toys *Godzilla* board game; the place where it all started.



In 2004, *Godzilla*'s 50th Anniversary, I was a guest of Toho to see *Godzilla* get his "star" on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In attendance were *Godzilla* himself (Tsutomu Kitagawa in the suit), Shogo Tomiyama, and Shinichi Wakasa, as well as several dozen of the very good friends I'd made thanks to this great, towering friend of mine.


As is the case with painters of those old movie posters, I still work in traditional oils and acrylics when I create a painting.

With so many artists working in digital mediums, I guess I'm kind of a dinosaur—but happy to be so.

So here we are, in *Famous Monsters* in 2011. I think back to the naysayers who wondered, "Where is this *Godzilla* fixation going to get you?" and I simply smile. When I first saw Issue 114 back in 1975, I thought, "Wouldn't it be cool to paint *Godzilla* for FM one day?" The circle was wide, but as you can see from this "Monster Kid", it is now complete!

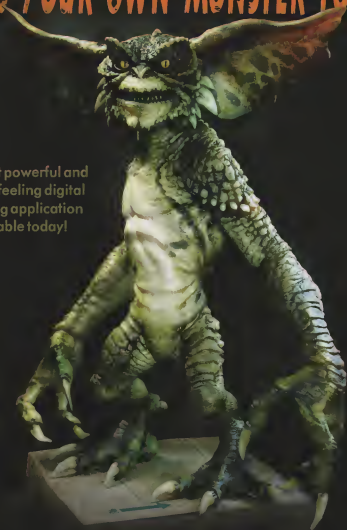
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大怪獣ガメラ

"It's Gamera, man.
Everyone should know
about Gamera."

GAMERA

1965-1966
// ガメラ対日本怪獣バトル

"IT'S GAMERA, MAN. EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GAMERA."

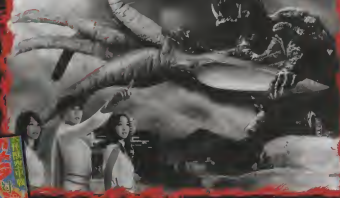
BY DAVID MCROBIE

Gamera movies were always the red-headed stepchild of Japanese monster films: there was scant information in magazines or books, and what there was almost always read as incredibly dismissive and usually wrong. Even at the start, the series was a bit different than its inspiration. Unlike Godzilla and his brethren, Gamera's monstrous foes never quite looked like natural animals. They almost all had super powers as well—frost breath, rainbow rays, poisonous gas, sonic beams, solid saliva spears, magnetic feet—you name it. They also bled buckets of multicolored blood.

Of course, AIP-TV's insistence on changing many of the names of the Gamera movies didn't help matters. Several Gamera movies

hurt, even as he wipes out cities and people. Obviously, Daiiei [Motion Picture Company] wanted the same sort of success Toho Studios was having with Godzilla. It was also a smart move in not killing Gamera.

It's not the most exciting origin movie, but it's well-filmed and has some really unique



and cool effects. Much of Gamera's flying was done with cel animation. The stark black and white photography looks great, especially in the opening scene when Gamera breaks free from his icy prison.

The second movie, *Daikaijū Ketchō: Gamera Tai Baragon* (Giant Monster Duel: Gamera Versus Baragon) was released directly to American television by AIP-TV, and like its predecessor was renamed for American audiences, this time given the moniker *War of the Monsters*. They took out nearly 20 minutes of plot, which improves the pace quite a bit. It's the most adult of the Gamera movies, and one many fans cite as their favorite. Not me. Even at its US running time of 88 minutes, it's far too serious and slow for its own

good. None of the characters are particularly admirable except for the island girl, Karen. Baragon is an excellently designed creature, though, and his powers are very dynamic—the ice tongue and the rainbow ray are great visuals. Especially dazzling is the effect of the ray reflecting back at Baragon. Another great scene is Gamera attacking and destroying Kurobe Dam.

Returning to a child in a starring role as had been done with the Toshio character in the original film, 1967's *Daikaijū Kichōsen: Gamera Tai Gyao* ("Giant Monster Midair Battle: Gamera Versus Gyao") was released in the U.S. as *Return of The Giant Monsters*. This is still a serious movie, as the scourge of the sky Gyao flies out of a volcano and menaces Japan with its poisonous gas and hypersonic ray. It also actively *eats people*. You didn't see that happen in Godzilla movies!

Even with a full screen picture and substandard dubbing, the

effects, especially as Gyao flies across the city, were quite impressive. The AIP dub on this one sounds like it was done by their "B" team; however, as some of the voices don't sound like our heroes of dubbing, the late Peter Fernandez and Corinne Orr.

In the next titanic opus, Daiiei hit on the formula they would use for the rest of the series: they teamed up a local boy with a *gaifin* (foreigner). The alien Viras comes to Earth in *Gamera Tai Uchō Kaijū Baitaru* (Gamera Versus Space Monster Viras) (1968), which AIP-TV changed to the incredibly exploitative title of *Destroy All Planets*. This was done to capitalize and perhaps confuse viewers into thinking they were seeing the same year's movie from Toho, the most excellent *Destroy All Monsters*.

This is my favorite Gamera movie. It first aired at 8 PM on a school night, and I stayed up late to watch it. Viras is my favorite Gamera foe, as well as the smartest alien he faced. There's just something really epic about an alien squid-monster trying to take over the world. Too bad for Viras that the two children he captured were smarter than he was. There is a lot of stock footage in the movie of previous monsters. But as there was no home video at the time, it was good to see the monsters again. Now at an older and possibly more discerning age, I can see that the stock footage slows the pace a bit. The American boy is played by Carl Craig. The incredibly catchy "Gamera March" by Kenjiro Hirose was also introduced in this movie.

In 1969, Daiiei released one of the best boys adventure movies ever made. They called it *Gamera Tai Daikaijū Giron* (Gamera vs. Giant Evil Beast Giron). AIP-TV lovingly imported it and retitled it *Attack of the Monsters*. The plot is simple: two boys are abducted to another planet via flying saucer. There are evil brain-eating space women with a giant monster, Gairo, that they use to protect themselves from the monsters on their planet Terra.

This is a movie for boys. Everything about it works as an adventure movie for boys of



THE GAMERA TRILOGY BY JASON NARVEY

The year was 1995. The "Heisei" *Godzilla* series was about to be winding down with that year's *Godzilla vs. Destroyer*, leaving an opening in the Japanese Giant Monster (Kaiju) film cannon. Gamera, after a 15 year absence, was about to stomp across Japanese screens again. But how would his comeback be received? The answer is that this trilogy would bring respect back to the giant monster genre and surprise filmgoers worldwide.



GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE (1995)

The first film pits our beloved turtle against one of his more popular foes, Gyao (from 1967's *Gamera vs. Gyao*). Murders on a sparsely populated island off the coast of Japan are attributed to a trio of bloodthirsty flying bird creatures. It's up to Gamera to take on these monsters before they make their way to the mainland, along with the help of a young girl, played by Steven Seagal's daughter, Ayako Fujitani, who just might have a psychic connection to Gamera.

It's to director Shusuke Kaneko's credit that he takes the material and plays it completely straight. While the previous 8 films in the series were aimed primarily at children, this new Gamera film has a number of grisly scenes, giving the film a darker quality—something that is not usually attributed to the genre. The special effects, supervised by Shinji Higuchi, are also extremely well done; and, Higuchi shows just what can be done with a little imagination and creativity. Both Gamera and Gyao are also nicely updated for the 90s.

Gamera: Guardian of the Universe was released on standard DVD by ADV films in 2003 with a number of extras, and is now available on a barebones, though visually stunning, blu-ray disc from Mill Creek along with its sequel, *Gamera Attack of the Legion*.

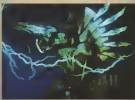


GAMERA: ATTACK OF THE LEGION (1996)

The next year brought us the second film in the series, in which a meteor shower brings some unwelcome visitors in the guise of insectoid/crab-like creatures. What do these creatures want, and what might it mean to the human race? Fortunately for us, Gamera is up for the challenge. But these monsters, called Legion, just may be too much for our hero to handle.

Kaneko and Higuchi find several moments to shine in this entertaining follow-up. The special effects are an improvement, with plenty of gruesome and generally frightening scenes involving these nasty creatures. The battles between the monsters are exciting, and the design of Gamera's enemy, his first new foe since 1971's *Gamera vs. Zigra*, is imaginative.

Gamera: Attack of the Legion was released on DVD in 2003 by ADV films in a dubbed and subtitled edition, and this year by Mill Creek in Japanese only with its prequel on Blu-ray in a beautiful presentation, though with no extras.



an adolescent age. There are monsters, spaceships, evading authority, being smarter than most grown-ups, and explosions. The boys are at just the right age to appreciate the allure of the evil space women. The set design of the planet Terra is also very visually appealing, and would have made an excellent playset.

Giant monsters invaded Expo 70, the real-life World's Fair held in Osaka in 1970, when *Gamera Tai Daimajō Jūgō* (*Gamera versus Giant Demon Beast Jiger*) was released. The film was shot partly on-location at the site of the actual Fair. In the States it was known as *Gamera vs. Monster X*, only the second time Gamera's name was used in the title. Perhaps AIP just got tired of thinking of more creative names, or maybe they figured that after five of these movies viewers would know who Gamera was.

In the movie, Gamera must save the Expo, and quite possibly the rest of the world, from the menace of Wester Island, Jiger! The film marks the first time Gamera fights a female monster, ostensibly by the fact that Jiger lays an egg inside Gamera. This allows for a fun and exciting bit with the boys who go on a fantastic voyage deep inside Gamera to help him out. It also allows for one truly disgusting bit of film in which an elephant's trunk is cut open and maggots spill out, which is cool and gross all at once (proving that Daiei knew the audience they were seeking)! Jiger has a vast array of great powers which are interestingly portrayed by the special effects.

The final film in the series is often considered the worst of the bunch. There are few redeeming qualities about 1971's *Gamera tai Shinkai Kaijū Jigura* (*Gamera versus Deep Sea Monster Zigra*). I'm not sure if AIP thought this film was not worth dubbing and releasing or if they themselves had run into financial trouble, but the movie was not released in dubbed form until about 1986 by Sandy Frank, and was simply called *Gamera vs. Zigra*.

Once again, an alien arrives on Earth looking for food. Interestingly enough, Zigra actually wants to save the Earth from humans who seem to be bent on destroying the planet with pollution. The movie contains some of the worst voice acting ever. One could only wish AIP or even William Ross had dubbed it. There are a few pluses, though: Zigra is a great-looking monster. The design doesn't work as well when the alien stands up, but that is the only fault. The effects are nice, as is the photography. Seen in a wide-screen print, the movie looks a lot better than it should. The human villain is a very attractive young lady as well. It was a sad way to end the series, however. Zigra, much like Varan, was a monster in search of a better movie.

Gamera didn't reappear for nearly ten years, and that was in the slightly better than *Zigra*



clipshow movie *Uchu Kayō Gamera* ("Space Monster Gamera") (1980), released in the U.S. by Filmways as *Gamera, Super Monster*. The plot revolves around an alien invasion of 6 monsters that Gamera must defeat. Oddly enough, these are the same six monsters he fought before (the film was comprised largely of stock footage as Daiel was teetering on the edge of bankruptcy at this point)! In order to finally defeat Zanon, Gamera makes the ultimate sacrifice.

This movie is slightly better than the previous one, mostly because it has many monsters. It's a "greatest hits of Gamera" package. Unfortunately, it's also very slapdash. It was still nice to see this in the '80s because it was the only time we could see Gamera battle Ziga.

I love giant monster movies. I always have. When I was a kid I would scour the weekly television schedule for anything remotely monster-related. Finding a whole new series of monster movies was great, and for me, that series was the Gamera movies. It's pretty common these days to have genre fans dismiss the original series, since most of them are unabashedly aimed at children instead of the general audiences most Godzilla movies were shooting for at the time.

Fortunately, information about the Gamera movies is everywhere. You can buy DVDs, some of which have three language tracks, with a beautiful widescreen picture that can be watched any time of the day. No more late night airings on a fuzzy UHF channel. No more scouring the TV Guide for a monster movie. It's all there at your fingertips. Which is all well and good, but the thrill of the hunt is gone. The anticipation that builds for the week while you wait to see the movie just isn't there anymore. While I may miss the chase, I am happy that Gamera, in all his incredibly insane glory, will be preserved properly for future generations of youngsters. He is after all—as his nickname states—the friend of children.



GAMERA: REVENGE OF IRIS

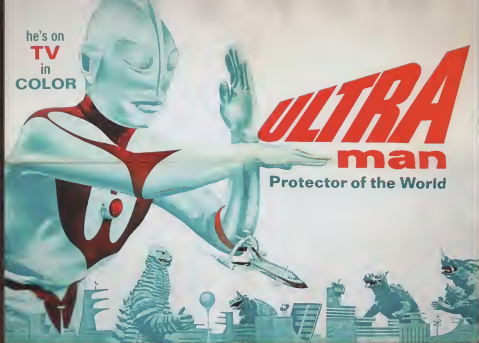
This time, in what would be the final film of the series, the world is threatened by a demon named Iris, which is hatched and then cared for by a young girl with a hatred for Gamera. Together, they try to vanquish Gamera for good while the fate of the world hangs in the balance. Gyaos also returns in an entertaining cameo.

This is generally regarded by most as the best film in the series, and for plenty of well-deserved reasons. First of all, the special effects are stunning. The battle between Gamera and Gyaos in Shibuya may just be one of the most thrilling monster battles ever committed to film. Shinji Higuchi seamlessly mixes live action and CGI, creating a realism heretofore unseen in these types of films. Some may find the film to be a bit plot-heavy, but overall it's an exciting conclusion to the Gamera series.

Gamera: Revenge of Iris was released on DVD in 2003 in a dubbed and subtitled edition by ADV films, but has yet to surface on blu-ray as of this writing.



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ULTRAMAN: PROTECTOR OF THE WORLD!

JAPAN'S ULTIMATE MAN OF STEEL

BY AUGUST RAGONE

From a distant galaxy comes the colossal Ultraman, an interplanetary guardian of peace, who arrives on our Earth while on the trail of a fugitive space monster. Accidentally taking the life of a member of the Science Patrol, Hayata, Ultraman combines his life force with Hayata's and joins with him to protect the world. The Science Patrol's mission: Seek and destroy the huge, strange, aggressive enemies of mankind. Mammoth creatures—grotesque, weird, horrendous, many stories high—appear from the far reaches of the Cosmos. From the mysterious depths of the Earth, from the murky Deep, Raging, ferocious, and seemingly invincible, these monsters try to destroy our civilization. In earthshaking hand-to-hand combat, Ultraman thwarts these enemies, and the Science Patrol and humanity are saved, only to go on to face the next dangerous foe.

In each half-hour episode, Hayata transforms into Ultraman at the climax of an unusual, action-packed adventure. The 39-episode series features futuristic equipment and weaponry in amazing scenes of destruction and devastation. Brilliant camera and production techniques make every episode a thrilling, eye-filling television experience. *Ultraman* features an unusually believable

array of synthetic monsters, special effects, and miniaturized scenery. These dramatic elements are the product of one of the most inventive talents in the industry, the highly creative Eiji Tsuburaya, master of visual effects and special photographic techniques, also known as the man who brought Godzilla to cinematic life. He created *Ultra Q*—the monster-filled precursor to *Ultraman*—and then went on to make many science fiction and war movies for the Toho Motion Picture Company before establishing his own Tsuburaya Productions.

One fateful afternoon, during my first years of grammar school, my mother was tuning in to one of San Francisco's relatively new UHF stations, KEMO-20. Suddenly, and without warning, an image appeared which burned itself eternally into my adolescent mind—a huge, ape-like creature peering over two snow-capped peaks—it was a scene from an episode of *Ultraman* (Episode 25 "Cyphon, The Rogue Comet"). Right then and there, I was forever hooked on Japanese monsters. Sure, I had been watching monster movies as far back as I remember (I even had an Aurora Godzilla model kit and copies of FM when I was only three or four years old!), and had even watched Godzilla, Rodan, Mothra, and other Japanese monsters on local television and in theaters, but that daily dose of *Ultraman*—weekdays at 5:00 pm on KEMO-20—just set me right over the edge. I really haven't been the same since.

Ultraman captured the imagination of American children throughout its long run in syndication, through United Artists Television, from 1968 through the early 1980s, when it slowly disappeared from cathode ray tubes across the nation. So, what was it about *Ultraman* that captivated us so much? Most live-



action science fiction television—whether it was *Lost In Space* and *Star Trek*—were shot on 35mm by veteran cinematographers, so the cameras were static, for the most part, and scenes were assembled and edited rather routinely. *Ultraman* was shot on 16mm by a predominantly young crew who were influenced by the French and Italian New Wave, with their guerilla filmmaking sensibilities firmly rooted in the ethic of cutting-edge Japanese television.

As a result, *Ultraman* featured camerawork, lighting, and editing unlike anything else on American television: Dutch and low angles, hand-held shots, avant-garde compositions, expressionistic lighting, and rapid, kinetic editing.

Another important element of *Ultraman* was its score by Kunio Miyauchi. While most American cartoons of the time would feature an extremely catchy theme song, the actual background music was generally cobbled together from library sources. Miyauchi, however, pulled out all of the stops, creating a hip and jazzy feel for the series and adding a further layer to *Ultraman*, which had a more action-driven format than previous series. Miyauchi drew heavily upon American action films and Italian New Wave, including Alessandro Cicognini's score for *The Bicycle Thief* (1948). Another concept Miyauchi employed was to approach the

overall series as a Musical—scoring original pieces he felt were required for a particular story, and composing straight from the teleplays. Of course, his famous theme song was also very integral to the show and has since gone on to become an elemental part of Japanese pop culture, even 45 years after it was originally penned.

But, how did *Ultraman* get started? Where did the concept come from? With the success of *Ultra Q*, the TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System) network ordered more — perhaps even a second season, which would feature monster-against-monster battles. This developed into a different concept, featuring a benevolent monster from outer space helping mankind to fend off attacks by malevolent monsters and insidious invaders. This plan was called “Bemler”, and it introduced a specially-equipped squad which would



later become known as the Science Patrol. The story was very similar to the basic concept of *Ultraman*, and eventually the benevolent monster was dropped because the network felt that viewers would have trouble sorting out the good monsters from the bad. One of the major creative forces behind *Ultra Q*, producer Hiroshi Kakoi, suggested a more identifiable protagonist who would stand out better to viewers. After the first round of brainstorming, writer Tetsuo Kinjo and Eiji Tsuburaya decided on a more humanoid design.

Evaluating their suggestions, Kakoi requested a being that was metallic-based—futuristic, inorganic, and representative of the Space Age. Production designer Tohru Narita recalls, “This was three years before Apollo 11’s historic Lunar Landing. The Japanese public’s opinion of the Space Race was pretty trivial.” The higher-ups deemed Narita’s early concepts as too sinister and alien, so he kept designing while the teleplays were being written and pre-production got underway. He was told by Tsuburaya to use his imagination to the fullest in incorporating Kakoi’s suggestion of a more benevolent image for the main character. Since Narita’s principal behind his monster designs for *Ultra Q* was founded on the Greek apotheosis of Chaos: Instability and Discord, he decided



that this character needed to symbolize the Greek apotheosis for Cosmos: Order and Harmony. He tried to imagine how a vastly intelligent and benevolent race of travelers would appear, their countenances reflecting a sense of absolute order and harmony, merging from their spaceships with archaic smiles.

After searching through the art of the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, he began to look inwards to the East, towards the figure who symbolized the journey from Chaos to Cosmos and became the embodiment of a warrior of the universe: Musashi Miyamoto (1584-1645). An unequalled swordsman, Musashi's journey from untamed youth to master of Zen is legendary. Combining the Spirit of Musashi with the placid countenance of the statue of



the Miroku Bosatsu at Kyoto's Koryu-ji Temple, Narita finally found the perfect incarnation of what he was searching for—the perfect Archaic Smile! Ultraman's benevolent visage bespoke harmonious simplicity—which Narita believed would be the ideal apotheosis for the Space Age—his silver skin invoking the fuselage of a rocket, red lines running down his body symbolizing the red canals of Mars. Seemingly invincible, Ultraman was still given an Achilles Heel—a warning light on his chest, indicating his

ebbing solar power, created to build suspense and allow viewers a dramatic device to root for their hero.

As with *Ultra Q* before it, *Ultraman* featured a parade of monsters that have become as memorable and iconic as the silver and red superhero himself: Baltan, Neronga, Pygmon, Red King, Antlar, Gabara, Jiras, Gavardon, Jamila, Drake, Gomora, Mephiras, and many more—all of them brought to life on paper by Narita and realized as monster suits by Ryosaku Takayama (in tandem with Equis Productions), continuing in their teamwork from the production of *Ultra Q*. To this day, new toys, model kits, and collectables are still being created in their image—while some of them have also returned in more recent Ultraman spinoffs for a new generation of fans. Many of the writers only gave vague descriptions of the monsters' physical natures—or they would be beyond what could be realized with 1960s visual effects—and in such cases Narita would be given free reign to design something more practical, still wild and exotic—but within the means of



Takayama or Equis Productions to bring to the screen.

The original characters and casting for the Science Patrol during the preproduction phase were quite different from what finally went on the air. In the final draft, the characters were pared down, with the decision to focus

them into a five-member unit, allowing each the proper character development so audiences could connect with them. The first to be cast was actress Hiroko Sakurai from *Ultra Q* as Officer Akiko Fuji. Most of the principals were pooled from Toho's stable of contract players, including Akiji Kobayashi (*Youth of the Beast*) as Captain Muramatsu, Susumu Kurobe (*None But the Brave*) as Officer Hayata, Iyoshi Ishii (*River of Forever*) as Officer Arashi, Susumu Ishikawa (*Red Beard*) as Officer Ide, and child actor



Akihide Tsuzawa (*Freezing Point*) as the team's mascot, Isamu Hoshino. Akihiko Hirata (*Godzilla*) was cast in the semi-regular role of the Science Patrol's scientific advisor, Dr. Iwamoto. Just before shooting began, Ishikawa had to leave the production and was replaced by Masanari Nihel (*The Lost World of Sinbad*). They immediately struck a cord with viewers the world over, owning their respective roles to the point where fans cannot imagine any other actors in these parts.

Part of Ultraman's success is that Tsuburaya could masterfully orchestrate all of these elements and combine them with numerous visual effects sequences, helmed by his

handpicked crews, into a wonderful and cohesive whole. It's no surprise that *Ultraman* was destined to become a hit around the world, from Asia to Latin America, and continues in its popularity today with multiple sequels, reboots, spin-offs and tie-ins—as well as imitations and rip-offs—building upon a rich, evolving pantheon of Ultra Heroes and Mythology. Unfortunately, the

original *Ultraman* series has more or less faded from the consciousness of US viewers since the 1980s (despite the broadcast of *Ultra Seven* in the 1990s, and *Ultraman Tiga* in the 2000s), but those children who were enraptured by each and every episode still fiercely and fondly remember it. I was one of them, and I continue to be, and we keep it alive thanks to the advent of Home Video. I would like to think that Tsuburaya's greatest legacy would be that his creations will continue on to inspire the imaginations of new generations to come.

Long live Ultraman, our hero from the stars!



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ULTRA Q

When the Balance of Nature is Disturbed,
There will be Monsters!

by Jim Cirronella

January 2, 1966, 7:00 pm. On this otherwise normal Sunday night during TBS's popular "Takeda Hour" (Takeda Hour was noted as such due to being sponsored by Takeda Pharmaceutical Co.), a mysterious swirling logo accompanied by eerie percussive sound effects heralded the arrival of giant monsters, bizarre space aliens, and otherworldly dimensions into living rooms throughout Japan. Unbeknownst to the TV-viewing audience, the "Kaiju Boom" of the 1960s had officially begun. It was the debut of *ULTRA Q*, the first installment in what would soon become an extensive legacy of fantastic television from Tsuburaya Productions.

Inspired by classic American sci-fi dramas such as *The Outer Limits* and *The Twilight Zone*, this 28-episode anthology series combined hard science fiction and supernatural fantasy with ample doses of comedy, resulting in a ratings windfall for its sponsors. Each week, any manner of strange phenomena were unleashed upon Japan, as the delicate balance of nature clashed headlong with the progress of mankind's scientific endeavors. This theme had been initially developed by Eiji Tsuburaya for the

proposed series *Unbalance*, a vehicle by which the special effects master's fledgling new company could enter the television arena. When Tokyo Broadcasting System later came onboard as a production partner, the emphasis shifted from straight-laced sci-fi mystery to a monster-of-the-week format, and *ULTRA Q* was born. (The series title is believed to have been inspired by "Ultra C," a popular catch phrase coined by broadcasters during the 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics in reference to extraordinary feats in the gymnastics competition.)

Shot in 35mm black and white film to accommodate Tsuburaya's high-quality visual effects, it was the most expensive television series being produced in Japan at the time. Even so, with each 24-minute episode playing as a virtual mini-feature film, *ULTRA Q*'s rich atmosphere and enormous scope was accomplished largely through creative ingenuity which often compensated for its lack of budget. Kōji Ishizaka's off-screen, staid narration provided an unmistakable *Twilight Zone*-like tone to the proceedings.

Though soon to be world-famous for giant colorful superheroes hailing from Nebula M78, Tsuburaya Production's inaugural small screen effort more simply depicted real-world characters dealing with extraordinary events. *ULTRA Q* starred Kenji Sahara as Jun Manjome, a commercial pilot and novice science fiction writer whose enthusiasm for the fantastic would often land him at the center of the series' weird scenarios. The regular cast also featured Yasuhiko Saijo as Ippei Togawa, Jun's assistant and comedic sidekick, and Hiroko Sakurai as the feisty newspaper photographer Yuriko Edogawa. Together, they formed an unlikely crack investigative team with a penchant for stumbling upon the unusual, preceding other famous television sleuths of the supernatural such as Carl Kolchak in *The Night Stalker* (1972) and, in more recent memory, FBI agents Mulder and Scully in *The X-Files*.

Tsuburaya's position at Toho enabled him to pull from a wide range of veteran screen talent for the new series. Sahara was already a familiar face in popular sci-fi fare such as *Rodan* (1956), *The Mysterians* (1957), and *King King vs. Godzilla* (1962), while Sakurai—an up-and-coming talent at Toho—would soon become a breakout star as Science Patrol agent Akiko Fuji in Tsuburaya's follow-up series, *Ultraman*. With Yoshifumi Tajima as Daily News desk editor Seki (Yuriko's boss) and Ureo Egawa as Dr. Ichinotani rounding out the series' regulars, *ULTRA Q* also gueststarred a virtual "who's who" of famous Japanese

feature film actors, adding a larger-than-life quality unequalled among other television productions of the era.

Also key to the series' success was its eclectic choice of music, composed by Kunio Miyauchi. Eschewing the orchestral approach of film composers, Tsuburaya embraced Miyauchi's jazzy, small ensemble compositions as *ULTRA Q*'s signature sound. The series' main theme features reverberant surf guitar laying down an ominous riff to brass accompaniment, while a throaty, beatnik-style flute and spooky Theremin add ambient textures.

But while it was fortunate that *ULTRA Q* was able to attract such excellence in both the acting and music departments, it was the series'



monsters and special effects that were ultimately responsible for its enduring popularity. Every technique in the book was employed to create the program's imaginative sequences, from suitation and stop-motion animation to split screen and rear screen projection to extensive miniature photography and optical effects. Working at a breakneck pace, art director Tobru Narita conceptualized the multitude of kaiju, while artist Ryosaku Takayama realized these designs as full-fledged monster suits—a particularly ironic twist since Narita was primarily known as a sculptor while Takayama's specialty was that of a painter!

Since the series was the brainchild of Eiji Tsuburaya, monster costumes from various Toho productions for which he had created the special effects were redressed as new creatures in *ULTRA Q*. Even veteran Godzilla suit actor Haruo Nakajima was drafted into service, coaching newcomers on how best to portray the monsters as well as appearing in several key kaiju roles himself including the premiere episode for which the title creature was a heavily-modified Godzilla suit.

The popularity of the series' kaiju stars, especially among children, was the key aspect responsible for the creation of *Ultraman* and subsequent sci-fi television programs by Tsuburaya Productions which ultimately put the spin-off company on the worldwide map. Even today, the unique monsters of *ULTRA Q* remain stalwart icons for the entire genre of Japanese science fiction.





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FROM AUTOMOBILE TO AUTOBOT

by Philip Nino Tan-Gatue



マジンガーZの初
期のデザインだ。
どこが変わって
いるかな?



永井豪原案の アイアンZ

甲壳の走るオートバイ
が、マジンガーの熱か
ら鉄鋼にドッキング!

Go Nagai sat in his automobile, gritting his teeth as he pondered the seemingly endless stream of vehicles in front of him. A Tokyo traffic jam was not the most pleasant predicament to be in, for sure, but Go was able to let his imagination roam. He was a young *mangaka*, after all—he made comics for a living—and if there was one thing that the great comic writers, east or west, had in common, it was the ability to draw inspiration from the most mundane of sources.

But... a traffic jam? What could he possibly derive from this, one of the most boring and mind-numbing scenarios known to man?

While not as epoch-altering as Newton's Apple, something wonderful was born inside Mr. Nagai's mind, baking in that auto. He wondered, what if, instead of driving a car, he was driving a giant robot that could just step over the traffic instead of lying on the road? Behold: the *Super Robot* was born. Let's get something straight here: giant robots and heroic robots and transforming robots had existed in science fiction before this. *Tetsuwan Atom* (aka *Astro-Boy*) first appeared in Osamu Tezuka's manga in 1952 and first appeared in anime in 1963. Mitsuteru Yokoyama arguably came up with the first giant robot with *Tetsujin 28* (aka *Gigantor*) in 1956, animated in 1963—which had been a favorite of Nagai's.

In the mid-1960s, Tezuka then came up with *Ambassador Magma*, known in America as *The Space Giants*. *Ambassador Magma* is significant because the main character is a humanoid gold-plated giant who can literally transform into a spaceship. It was the first live action children's show in Japan filmed in color, produced by P-Productions, which preceded *Ultraman* to the



A modern Roideon toy (above) and one of the first prototype drawings of what later become MAZINGER Z (left). Model image courtesy of BandaiMore.

airwaves by less than a week. Yokoyama was then asked to create a rival character for another live action show, and he came up with *Giant Robo*, known in the US as *Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot*.

But, the best was yet to come.

So, what did Go Nagai come up with that was different, that was so special? In Nagai's concept, the robot was not an independent entity, but was *piloted* by the hero. What this means is that you're not just talking to a sentient robot, hoping it'll do you a favor and fight your battles. You're not just barking commands into a receiver and hoping that your automaton responds fast enough to do something useful. You are *actually driving*, directly controlling the giant robot from a cockpit. The hero is literally in the driver's seat!

Go Nagai's original concept was to have the pilot drive a motorcycle up the robot's back and into the head, which necessitated the robot having a long ramp, which made it resemble a giant tin can. Nagai refined the idea by switching from a motorcycle to a one-man flying vehicle he called the *Hover Pilder*. This eventually materialized as *Mazinger Z*, the nexus of what would become the popular Super Robot genre. Developed as an animated series by Nagai's Dynamic Productions and Toei Doga (now Toei Animation), *Mazinger Z* was introduced as a manga in October 1972, and hit the airwaves two months later.

Among its innovations were a near-symbiotic relationship between pilot Kouji Kabuto and the titular Mazinger Z. Kouji had a habit of shouting out weapon command names, which later became a Japanese superhero standard. The show became an unprecedented hit, running for 92 episodes and spawning a direct sequel, *Great Mazinger*, in 1974. Go Nagai's Super Robots were a bonanza for sponsor and toymaker Poppy (a character toy division of the Bandai juggernaut), and soon Nagai teamed up with Ken Ishikawa from his own Dynamic Productions bullpen to add another super robot to their stables, *Getter Robo*.

Getter Robo has often been called the first transforming robot. However, I believe he should more properly be called the first *combining* robot. Nagai and Ishikawa came up with the innovation of three *Getter Mochines* (shape-shifting aircraft): *Eagle*, *Jaguar*,



and Bear. Depending on the order of combination, one of three robots would be formed. A combination of Eagle on top, Jaguar in the middle,

and Bear at the bottom would form the airborne *Getter One*. Jaguar-Bear-Eagle would form the speedy *Getter Two*. Bear-Eagle-Jaguar would form the physically powerful *Getter Three*—three times the toy sales potential for Poppy! Yet, something was missing. *Getter Robo* had these combinations in the anime and manga, but the combos were done in such a way as to make it impossible to engineer into a toy. The cycle had not come full circle yet.

By 1975, rival *Tohokushinsha* knew it had to cash in on the Super Robot trend.

It produced an interesting combination of science fiction and mystical ancient technology in *Yuusha Raideen* (*Brave Raideen*), which involved a young teenage boy mystically entering a golden giant figure and becoming its pilot. The golden giant figure would await its pilot/master by standing upright with its arms and face covered. When Akira Hibiki—yet another teenaged character designed to appeal to the teen audience—mystically “fades into” Raideen’s head, Raideen changes to normal colors and reveals his arms and faceplate. While not a transformation *per se*, the



Ambassador Magna/Goldar similarities are obvious.

The true transformation comes when Raideen finishes off the monster of the week. Raideen transforms into a bird mecha called Godbird, which handily slices through the opponent like a knife through butter. This transformation was successfully transposed to the toys, in which children could imitate the actions they saw on television from Raideen to Godbird, and back again. Of course, Poppy was holding the merchandize licensing for all of the toys for *Brave Raideen*, and began to edge out the competition in transforming diecast robots.

More innovations that year came with the introduction of more Go Nagai-created robots, each with its own unique gimmick: *UFO Robo: Grendizer* (1975) had enemies transform from flying





saucer-mode to monster robot-mode, while *Jeeg of Steel* (1975) had hero Hiroshi Shiiba become a cyborg, who could transform into the head of the titular super robot—the *Headmaster* concept, in its most primitive form, was born right there. A sequel to *Götter Robo*, called *Getter Robo G* (1975), also aired that year. In the late 1970s, both *Getter Robo G* and *Grendizer* were dubbed into English as part of Jim Terry's *Force Five* package, while *Getter Robo G* was broadcast several years earlier with English subtitles on Honolulu's KIKU-13 (the series also aired on other US stations with Japanese-language programming, as had *Brave Raideen*.)

The next year, brought a joint project between Toei and the group behind *Brave Raideen*, which would soon become the world-famous animation studio known as Sunrise: *Super Electromagnetic Robo: Combattler V*. *Combattler V* is significant in that the robot was formed from five military vehicle components, and that the toys actually reflected this transformation. Unlike the unrealistic stretching and twisting needed for *Getter Robo*, the Battle Machines: Battle Jet, Crusher, Tank, Marine, and Craft, could actually be combined into one robot. This model was so successful that the next year had Toei and Sunrise creating a similar, and vastly more popular series, called *Super Electromagnetic Machine: Voltes V*, featuring a robot with the exact same combining scheme. 1976 was also the beginning of the mecha craze, as it seemed that every toy and anime enterprise wanted a super robot of their own. Even Tatsunoko Productions, known for *Science Ninja Team: Gatchaman* (aka *Battle of the Planets*) came up with its first Super Robot.

Another notable entry that year was Elken Productions' *UFO Warrior: Dai Apollon*. While not as grand as Go Nagai and Sunrise's robots, *Dai Apollon* was notable in that it was the first case that several robots combined into a main robot. The Apokos Powder, Tronzu, and Lagger toys also transformed. However, the toys made by Bulmark were quite heavy and bulky, which resulted in their relative unpopularity.

The next eight years or so would represent the zenith of Super Robot popularity, with several series making it to the US (*Danguard Ace*, *Grendizer*, *Getter Robo G*, and 1976's *Space Dragon Gaiking* all made it as part of Jim Terry's *Force Five* package—*Mazinger Z* was syndicated as *Tranzor Z*, *Fighting General Daimos*, *Voltes V* and *Dai Apollon* were shown as TV Movies—and we haven't even mentioned *Voltron*!).



Goldar from *Space Giants - Ambassador Magma* (left) Mitsuteru Yokoyama's original manga cover for *GIANT ROBOT* (above)

With the popularity of the shows came a boon in toy sales. Previously mentioned Poppy was smiling all the way to the bank, and everyone else wanted a piece of it. It was also around this time that several Poppy toys were rebranded as *Shogun Warriors* and brought over to the States in 1976. As part of the marketing, Toei struck a deal with Marvel, enabling the comic book giant to produce a mercifully short-lived yet entertaining series featuring Americanized versions of *Raideen*, *Combattler*, and *Danguard Ace*, called— you guessed it—*Shogun Warriors*.

I'd like to point out that personally, while my first exposure to Japanese Super Robots was through locally (Philippine) dubbed versions of shows, it was through the US versions that my love and knowledge of the genre expanded exponentially. I remember most of my childhood robot toys being *Shogun Warriors*.

So, while the diecast and giant plastic toys were hits for Poppy, one of their rivals, Takara, wanted in on the action. The thing about Takara was that they already had a hit toy line called *Microman*, originally conceived in the early '70s as a mini version of their own *Henshin Cyborg* (*Transforming Cyborg*) line—a

cross between Hasbro's *G.I. Joe* (which Takara was the Japanese distributor of) and *Captain Action*, allowing you to dress them up as current live action and anime superheroes. Takara had decided to make them smaller to make manufacturing their vehicles and accessories more practical.

The history of Takara's *Microman* franchise is worthy of an article in itself, but we'll concentrate on how the Super Robot craze influenced it. The late 70s brought in more and more Super Robot influence, so much so that Takara came up with a sub-line called *Diaclone*. The ultimate *Diaclone* toy for many was the *Great Robot Base*, a humongous, battery-operated Super Robot that could transform into a base, complete with inch-high *Microman* figures. Among the special aspects of the *Diaclone* line were vehicles that actually had cockpits for the *Microman* figures. Imagine: Vehicles that transformed into robots with little cockpits. If that doesn't scream of Super Robot influence, I don't know what does.

The difference was that Takara's transforming robots actually reflected real life. No futuristic vehicles looking like *Star Wars* drawing board samples, but Lamborghinis and military jets. There was even a whole line called Car Robots. Wait, wait. Transforming car toys? Jets? Why does this sound familiar?

Autobots and Decepticons.

Yes, boys and girls, what Hasbro introduced to the market as *The Transformers* in 1984 were, in fact, repackaged *Diaclone* toys. Bob Budiansky deserves a special place in *Transformers* lore for developing the basic *TF* plot and coming up with their awesome names. For example, the rather pedestrian (in my opinion) *Convoy*—itself named after the US movie of the same title—became *Optimus Prime*. (For the record, *Convoy* was still called *Convoy* in Japanese *TF* shows.)

Hasbro sold the *Diaclone* toys without their firing missiles or small, easy-for-young-kids-to-swallow *Microman* figures. Next time you get your hands on your old classic *G.I. Autobots* or your classic *Decepticon* jets, look for the small cockpits designed for the *Microman* figurines.

For completeness' sake, I must mention that the "life size" *Transformers* such as *Megatron* and *Soundwave*, as well as the *Autobot* mini-vehicles like *Bumblebee*, were also from the Takara line, but were not part of the *Diaclone* universe. They were meant to



be actual life-size mini robots as opposed to toy versions of "realistic" cars.

Later, Takara discontinued the *Diaclone* and *Microman* lines and simply concentrated on *Transformers*. Following suit, Popy created a line of small transforming robots called *Machine Robo*, which would become known in the US as Tonka's *Gobots*.

I guess we can thus say that the '70s was the decade of disco music, big collared shirts, and the Super Robot. However, it was in 1979 that the seeds were planted for the blooming of the 80s craze—the realistic or "real" robot, now universally known as *Mobile Suit Gundam*.

In most Super Robot shows, the robots were unique, like superheroes. In *Gundam*, we were introduced to universes where robots were part of daily life, like cars or planes. This concept came full circle with 1982's *Super Dimensional Fortress Macross*, which featured very realistic, transforming, mass-produced robots in an army. The early '80s brought in a slew of robot shows, but these retained some Super Robot elements. Everyone in *Gundam* had their own robots, so *Gundam* was still in a class of its own.

The Super Robot invaded America in full with 1981's *Godin: The King of Beasts*, packaged with 1982's *Däimoniger XV* into the *Lion* and *Vehicle Voltron* teams, respectively. *Voltron* took the Super Robot craze to America's shores, and was probably most widely seen introduction for American kids to the combining-to-form-one-robot concept. Given this, one should not be surprised that *Transformers* toys would take the next step beyond transforming robots to transforming *and* combining robots! The first set, which was the adaptation of *Diaclone* toys, became the *Constructicons*. Later, Takara made the arms and legs interchangeable, and called the *TF* subset *Scramble City*.

Transformers only lasted three seasons in the US (which Japan had dubbed as *Transformers* and *Transformers 2010*). What happened when Japan ran out of American TV footage to convert? They made their own, albeit with Super Robot influence, of course! 1987 saw the show *Transformers: The Headmasters* (remember *Jeeg of Steel*?). I suggest watching how the huge *Fortress Maximus* would transform. I would swear that I was watching *Raiden* or *Combattler V* go through a transformation sequence! Ditto for *Gladiator* (*Powermaster Optimus Prime*) in 1988's *Transformers: Masterforce*.

The Super Robot influence of giant combining robots came to low-point in 1989. Since *Transformers* toys were no longer selling much in the US, and no new designs were being created, Takara simply made its own Japanese-only *Transformers*, whose only difference from Super Robots was that the robots were sentient and not piloted.

Obviously the saga of the Super Robot continues beyond this point. Various sub-genres have propped up, such as the *Eldran* series, *Rafjin-Oh*—where schoolchildren are the pilots—remakes galore of the classics such as *Mazinger* and *GGetter Robo*, and the *Brave Series*, which are direct descendants of the Japanese original *transformers* series, the most well known example being *GaoGaiGar*. Giant Transforming Robots also feature well in Japanese live action series, the most famous import to America being the *Power Rangers*.

However, all of these modern interpretations and additions ultimately trace their popularity and lasting power to an idea. An idea borne in the mind of one comic book writer while being stuck in a traffic jam. If it were not for Go Nagai and *Mazinger Z*, would there have been a giant robot *era* in the 70s? If not for the giant robot *rush*, would there have been a demand for toys? If not for the huge demand for transformative toys, would there have been the *Micromat* and *Diaclone* lines that eventually became the *Transformers*?

Truly, from *Automobile* to *Autobot*, there's more to Super Robots than meets the eye.



KIKAIDA

THE SWITCHED-ON JAPANDROID SURGES ONWARD

By Edward L. Holland

Imagine an electromagnetic surge of adrenalin pumping through your human brain as you bolt down the sidewalk with your friends towards the local comic shop after a matinee showing of *Inframan* ("The Ultimate in Science Fiction") on a red-hot bicentennial summer day. The memory, for me, is stronger than the "thunderbolt fists" used by the main character Raymar when he transformed into the cybernetic hero from this infamous H.K./Japan co-production.

We arrived at the comic shop out of breath, and no one knew what was waiting for us on the dusty shelves of the old bookstore run by two hippies. These were the days when you could check out *FMs* from the library, along with Super 8mm films of *Nosferatu*, *Our Gang* comedies, and occasionally a 50 ft. reel of *Rodan* if you were lucky. Neglected *Star Trek* spaceship models hung from the ceiling; and, lying dormant in a handmade plywood box was the holy grail of *Famous Monsters* issues, #114. This hard-to-find, sold out issue mysteriously appeared in terrible condition, but was nursed back to life with an iron after I learned how to use one in the Boy Scouts.

More intriguing than the issue's epic monster coverage was the feature by Masao Kono on Toei Company Ltd.'s *Kikaider*—or *Kikaider*, depending on how it was spelled—and the six black and white

Some say that *Kikaider* grew out of a tribute to *Pinocchio* and *Frankenstein*, but the show speaks more of the writers', producers', directors', and actors' ability to synthesize international literature with media cultures, while forging an unforgettable import forever stamped as one-of-a-kind. Its success is methodically woven from the fabric of manga, East-meets-West themes, infectious music, and colorful, gritty, 16mm imagery overloaded with dynamic

SOME SAY THAT KIKAI DA GREW OUT OF A TRIBUTE TO PINOCCHIO AND FRANKENSTEIN, BUT IT SPEAKS MORE TO THE WRITERS, PRODUCERS, DIRECTORS AND ACTORS ABILITY TO SYNTHESIZE INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE WITH MEDIA CULTURES...

images never before seen. It definitely was not *Kamen Rider*, and I envisioned my friends in Japan watching the show during its first run. I always wondered if someone had photographed those shots live off of a tv screen with an SLR camera set to 1/30th of a second. The issue beckoned some to sell their belongings, save some yen, and visit the birthplace of luminary heroes like *Ultraman Taro*, *Baron 1*, *Spectreman*, *Zone Fighter*, *Henshin Ninja Arashi*, and multitudes more.

brilliance. *Kikaider*, starring Ban Daisuke as Jiro, and the subsequent series, *Kikaider 01*, starring Shunsuke Ikeda as Ichiro, grew out of the incredible, visionary mind of Shotaro Ishinomori, and both titles were released as comics shortly thereafter in *Weekly Shonen Sunday*. These shows, strategically placed in highly sought-after prime time network slots, jumped off the small screen and into the psyche of Japanese society.

Having to wait so long to see *Kikaider* as a kid was painful, but unavoidable unless you caught it in Japan on NET (TV Asahi) in 1972, or in Hawaii where it was shown on the VHF channel affiliate KIKU TV in 1974 and, a bit later, on UHF only channels in Los Angeles and San Francisco's Fuji TV on KEMO Channel 20 in 1975. These exceptionally bold markets embraced foreign



superheroes like close friends, and the larger-than-life characters transcended the boundaries of television as related goods quickly became rain-check items in stores stocking Japanese toys, school supplies, and vinyl recordings.

From the first note of the theme song in Episode 1 when *Kikaïda* fights Gray Rhino King to the final episodes where Jiro fights Hakaïda, his darkest adversary, the audience is left with a true comic book sensation, complete with non-resolute ending. *Kikaïda* holds a place of esteem among live action programs for its storyline and on-screen chemistry among the actors and crew, still mesmerizing fans today. Its universal appeal surfed an intense second wave of popularity during reruns in Hawaii from 2001 – 2004, which created a welcoming efimite for the rebirth of the infamous Kikaïda Brothers.

Here on the mainland, *Ultraman* is more popular and *Kamen Rider* revs in a close second, but back in paradise, *Kikaïda* is truly the victor, spanning generations. Ben Daisuke and Shunsuke Ikeda started appearing together in the 70s alongside monster costumes flown in from Japan and their suit actors, causing sheer pandemonium. Kids started mimicking the extreme action stunts in the schoolyards, and letters and irate calls from principals to parents further strengthened the brothers' grip on tuned-in neighborhoods. Whole malls filled up with kids, mothers, fathers, and extended families to witness historic *Kikaïdamania*. The show launched a memorable 3D live-action film in 1973, a movie on *Hokaido* in 1995, an animation program in 2000, and tons of collectibles that continue to be bartered through online auctions worldwide.

America and Japan both breed casual as well as deeply obsessive fans—some of which make their own custom costumes. The series, a lightning 1-2 knockout combo of machines, music, monsters, and Kawasaki motorcycles, is a safe, legal drug to many boys and girls. Many of the fans have grown older, gained a little weight, and lost a little hair, but they are proud to pass the torch of their passion on to their children, and even their grandchildren. Japan's fantasy films and television shows are a viable and inseparable part of American pop culture, just as the "conscience circuit" built and stored in Jiro's body by his father Dr. Komyoji is the necessary fly in his robotic salve.

However, Kikaïda's conflict with his android engineered circuitry leaves him incomplete, and therefore, he does not desire to be more human, while the fans can barely control their nostalgic feelings for these heroes from their childhood. They exhibit their appreciation on billboards, fan sites, and in publications like *FM*. Such heroes teach us about humanity while they beat the resistors out of crime organizations like DARK and their Destructoids run by the demented Professor Gilt, without censors slicing and dicing any scenes.



Stand-out storylines include Episode 11 *Gold Wolf Howls in Hell*, when Kikaïda has to come to grips with ending a fellow android's life. In this episode, the monster under a full moon tries to stop slaughtering innocent victims but loses out to his flawed Wolfman circuitry nightly, while Jiro struggles to save him from his ultimate fate. The mechanical man cries tears of sadness for the robot that he turns into a useless pile of gears and damaged remnants from a Radio Shack rummage sale. In the twisted Episode

30: *Red Squid Targets the Beautiful College Student*, the robot monster Red Crimson Squid goes on a rampage targeting sexy coeds possessing high intellect. The squid successfully kills four beautiful young women with exceptional abilities in the areas of martial arts, music, electronics, and chemistry by sucking out their life energy and knowledge from their brains. His fifth conquest, an attractive expert in robotics, confuses the evil automaton with her discussion about his inferior programming, which prevents her immediate death and frees up her time to focus on Jiro, her robotic dream-knight of justice in shining blue and red armor with yellow pinstripes.



THE CHEMISTRY BETWEEN THE ACTORS IS A SEAMLESS DISPLAY OF EXPRESSIVE, JOYOUS, SORROWFUL, AND COMEDIC ACTING FREE OF TRITE SCRIPT VIRUSES THAT SOUR MOST CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS.

Balances between moral challenges and brief forays into humor are all common threads in programs from the 1970s, and the characters Dr. Komyoji, Mitsuko, Masaru, Hanpei/Hanpen, and the handsome Saburo—who turns into Hakaider—are outstanding comic book roles. The chemistry between the actors is a seamless display of expressive, joyous, sorrowful, and comedic acting free of trite script viruses that sour most children's programs.

In the late 70s, 80s, and even the early 90s, it was usually a casual phone call, a letter, a meeting with friends at someone's house, or a convention that sparked discussions about characters like Ultraman and Gamera, or the "Big G" (Godzilla) as we used to call him. Today there are greater avenues for people to find out about *Kikaider*, and many are all just a click away on your computer.

A thank-you goes to *Famous Monsters* Issue #114 and the lesser known Issues #91, 135, and others for brainwashing us to prioritize our chores and weekends around televised showings of films like Toho Co. Ltd./Rankin & Bass' *King Kong Escapes* and AIP's *Destroy All Monsters*, and even more so for inspiring us to save money for the inevitable day when we would finally see whole episodes of *Kikaider*, and later meet the legendary Ban Daisuke himself in the flesh.

Shows that were directly influenced by *Kikaider* include all the Space Sheriff shows of the 80s, as well as vibrant classics like *Gavan*, *Shorivan*, *Spiegelvan*, and *Metaldar*—all from Toei Company Ltd. The April 2011 movie *000 Den-O All Riders: Let's Go Kamen Riders* includes *Kikaider*, *Kikaider 01*, and the characters Inazuman and Zubat in support of the entire Kamen Rider family of heroes. As studios relaunch properties, like P Productions' *Denjin Zaborger* transformed in 2011 by Susho Typhoon into *Karate Robo Zaborger*, hopefully they remember that the creations and iconic moving images from Japan's golden past are the trailblazing examples to live up to and be respected on all levels.

Let us look back favorably on old issues of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* that established clear, innocent guidelines for promoting these treasures from the orient, while Japan, our trusted ally, rapidly emerged as an economic super power. Long live FM and the well-fortified pagoda that Forry built. In light of the recent tragic upheaval in Japan, the heroes from the past and present are instilling the fighting spirit in children through respective media campaigns, as they rebuild devastated communities and keep the country's future leaders focused on taking care of each other through local and international relationships, between young and old, for the betterment of the next generation of monster fans.



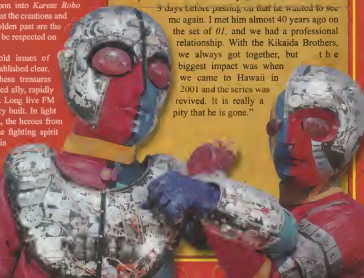
SIDEBAR SIDE MACHINE

Kikaider first aired in 1974 on Hawaii's KIKU Television, and a subsequent marketing frenzy took the islands by storm. The show was later broadcast on the west coast, and its legacy today commands legions to travel wherever Ban Daisuke appears.

"My main memory of Hawaii the first time I came [in 1975] was that everyone was shocked and in awe of the people that showed up, and it was entire families and moms and dads that got involved with the kids. That really impressed me," stated Ban.

Kikaider spawned *Kikaider 01*, and Shunsuke Ikeda played the role of Ichiro from 1972 ~ 1973. Later, the brothers toured off and on until Ikeda's untimely death in 2010. Ban explained their friendship at a dinner show last year in L.A.'s Little Tokyo, "Ikeda-san mentioned

3 days before passing on that he wanted to see me again. I met him almost 40 years ago on the set of *01*, and we had a professional relationship. With the Kikaider Brothers, we always got together, but the biggest impact was when we came to Hawaii in 2001 and the series was revived. It is really a pity that he is gone."





In the late 1960s, American International Television imported one of the most exciting Japanese live action programs on TV and unleashed it on American kids: *Johnny Sokko and his Flying Robot*. It gave us sci-fi at its best, along with spy film intrigue and, of course, giant monsters!

The story begins when the Emperor Guillotine from planet Gargoyl invades earth. It's up to the secret defense organization Unicorn to stop him. Guillotine forms the Gargoyle Gang ('Big Fire' in Japan) and attacks our cities with an array of giant space monsters and destructive super-machines. Their main assault weapon is a giant, nuclear-powered flying robot. Impervious to all known attacks, including atomic heat and high voltage, Giant Robot is armed with finger missiles, laser beams, a megaton punch, and other powerful weapons.

A young boy, Johnny Sokko (Daisaku Kusama in the Japanese version), is on a cruise ship in the Pacific Ocean when he meets Unicorn Agent U3, Jerry Mano (Juro Mano). Jerry is investigating recent ship disappearances in the area. Suddenly, a giant gill-man-like creature known as Dracolon surfaces and sinks the great vessel while they are aboard. Johnny and Jerry wash ashore on a tropical island that turns out to be a Gargoyl base. Of course, the two survivors are immediately captured, but it's not long before they attempt an escape. Johnny and Jerry enter a lab where they discover the Gargoyl Gang's ultimate weapon, Giant Robot.

There they meet Dr. Lucius Guardian (Dr. Garuchua), who forced the Gargoyles to build Giant Robot. The doctor explains that Giant Robot will only respond to the first voiceprint entered into its electronic brain.

As it would happen, just then Johnny speaks a command into the robot's wristwatch voice transmitter, thus becoming its sole controller. Dr. Guardian sends Johnny and Jerry away from the base after setting an atom bomb to detonate in the lab. The explosion destroys everything, with the exception of Giant Robot. The explosion gives the mechanical wonder the atomic power it needed to activate. Now, with Giant Robot at his disposal, Johnny Sokko (now known as U7) joins Unicorn to take on the threat of the evil Emperor Guillotine.

Johnny Sokko produced some of the most memorable monsters from the "Kaiju Boom" era of the 1960s—everything from the Gargoyl Vine to a gigantic eye called Opticon surfacing from the depths of hell to attempt the destruction of mankind. Gargoyl even creates an evil version of Giant Robot known as Torozon (GR2). Giant Robot was often referred to as 'GR1' in the original Japanese version. The manga version actually introduces a GR3 which unfortunately never made it to television.

Even better than the monsters were Emperor Guillotine's generals. You had Spider (Matasaburo Tanba), the cocky commander of the Gargoyl Gang. Matasaburo Niwa had other roles in the *Zatoichi* films, and his most memorable was Black Shogun from the original

from *Spider* (1971). But as the series progressed, *Spider-Man*'s henchmen got even more bizarre—like with Doctor Botanus, a GI Joe look-a-like, or the actor, Mitsuo Ando, went on to portray Professor Gil in Shotaro Ishinomori's *Jinzo Ningen Kikaido* (*Android Kikaido*). There was also the one-eyed Harlequin, Black Dia, played by Hideo Murota, who had numerous roles in hero shows like *National Kid* (1960), *Captain Ultra* (1967), and *Baron I* (1972). And who can forget Fangar (Koji Miemachi), with a peg leg and a severe overbite? Koji Miemachi went on to make appearances on TV series like *Key Hunter* (1969) and *G-Men* (1976).

Unicorn was your typical Ultraman-like Science Patrol team, which became the blueprint for many giant hero programs down the line. It appeared Unicorn had no real defense except for guns and rocket packs. Until receiving help from Johnny Sokko and Giant Robot they really had no chance against the Gargoyle Gang. The secret agency was created to maintain world peace, laughably, with machine guns and pistols.

Commanded by Chief Azuma (Shozaburo Date) U1, Unicorn had bases stationed around the world. Actor Date Shozaburo appeared in two Super Giant features (*The Artificial Satellite and the Destruction of Humanity*, and *The Spacemen and the Clash of the Artificial Satellite*). Both films were edited into the U.S. release of *Attack From Space* (1964). Johnny Sokko was played by Mitsunobu Kaneko, who also starred in Toei's *Akuma-Kun* (Li'l Devil) as Shingo Yamada, along with Yoshio Yoshida as Mephisto. *Akuma-Kun* was a 1966 TV series based on the eerie supernatural manga by yokai ('ghost/demon') artist Shigeru Mizuki (*GeGeGe no Kitaro*, *Sanpei the Kappa*). You also can't help but notice Unicorn beauty Agent U5, Mitsuko Nishino, played by starlet Yumiko Katayama. The stunning actress later made an appearance in *Horrors of the Malformed Men* (1969), a number of Toei's Pinky Violence films, and the TV series *Playgirl* (1969) and *Playgirl Q* (1974). It also seemed that Unicorn had no problem recruiting kids into the agency. Agent U6 Mari (Tomomi Kuwabara) was an 11 year-old girl who could speak 39 different languages. She handled a machine gun with ease, and even saved Johnny on a few occasions. Tomomi Kuwabara was a kid's magazine idol, as well as a pop singer.

Giant Robo was originally created by brilliant manga artist Mitsuteru Yokoyama. Born in 1934, Yokoyama created some of Japan's most iconic characters. The most popular by far was the





Giant Robot in his rogues gallery (top) Tomomi Kuwahara, the 11-year-old polyglot and machine gunner, U6 (left)

inspiration of all robots from Japan, Tetsujin 28 (Gigantor). Before Tetsujin 28-go was animated in 1963, it was produced as a 13-episode live action TV series in 1960. Yokoyama had a few more robots that made it to the airwaves as well. If you grew up with *Shogun Warriors*, you may remember the Super Robot *Tosho Daimos* (Fighting General Daimos). Then there was *Babel II*, in which a young boy learns he is a reincarnation of "Babel" and is aided by three Herculoid-like servants. One is a giant robot named Poseidon, one is Lodem—a transforming amorphous organism usually in the form of a panther—and one is Repress, a giant monster bird.

Yokoyama covered other genres as well. He was a master of ninja storytelling. First was *Iga no Kagemaru* (Kagemaru of Iga), which appeared in Weekly Shonen Magazine in 1961. It was extremely popular since it combined ninja themes with hero elements. The manga was followed by a feature film in 1963 produced by Toei that caused a ninja craze in Japan. Yokoyama's most famous ninja story of all became an action-packed live action TV series called *Kamen no Ninja Akakage* (Red Shadow, The Masked Ninja). The series started with heroes Red Shadow, White Shadow, and the young Blue Shadow fighting other ninjas, but by the series second half their foes were all giant monsters. One giant monster, Sennen Hiki (Thousand Year Old Toad) was also seen in Toei's *Kabryu Daikessen* (Duel of the Magic Dragon's), known the U.S. as *The Magic Serpent*. Mitsuteru Yokoyama even dipped into illustrating

shoujo manga, or girl's comics. *Mahotsukai Sally* (Sally, The Witch, 1966) and *Comet-san* (Ms. Comet, 1967) inspired a flood of magical girl manga and anime still being produced today.

The Giant Robo manga is a must for any *Johnny Sokko* fan. Appearing in Weekly Shonen Sunday Magazine in 1967, Giant Robo was highlighted by its fast-paced action and amazing illustrations. Yokoyama's attention to detail, from the components in Johnny's watch to the joints and rivets of his mecha designs, are breathtaking. Later that year, Giant Robo was adapted into a 26-episode live action TV series by Toei Productions.

Giant Robo was brought to the U.S. in 1969, re-titled and dubbed as *Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot*. In 1970 the Toei Company edited a few episodes together for a TV movie, *Voyage Into Space*, which is now cult classic. Left mostly intact for us to enjoy was the cool upbeat jazz score by Takeo Yamashita. The famous composer was already behind the soundtracks of *Super Jetter* (1965), *Adventure on Gabuten Island* (1967), *Akuma-Kun* (1966), and later, *Lupin the Third* (1971).

Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot was pretty violent, by American standards, for its time. Even with all of the gun play, somehow we were lucky enough to see the program relatively uncut. An updated anime version called *Giant Robo: The Day the Earth Shook Still* was released straight to video in 1992. Then, to celebrate the 40th anniversary in 2007, a 13-episode animated TV series, *GR: Giant Robo* followed the style of the manga a little more closely, but it was still a re-envisioning.

We can only hope that Toei will bring us a new live action version to celebrate Giant Robo's 50th birthday.

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FAMOUS LAST WORDS

We hope that you've enjoyed your time walking in the footsteps of the giants. And it was nice that Mr. Ragone finally cleared-up the origin of the two endings in *King Kong vs. Godzilla* that Forry unleashed so many years ago. While it is sad that our journey through the Fer East has come to an end, there are many more adventures ahead, including a trip to the Imagi-Movies Film Festival via the Festival Magazine, including interviews and articles with Bela Lugosi Jr., Victoria Price, Roger Corman, and more. Or maybe, for our sophisticates in the bunch (there's always a few of you) it's our art book that will contain works from some of the finest artists who cite *FM* as a driving force in their work. Or maybe, for those daring enough to make the trek, hop in our DeLorean, crank it up to 88mph, and take a trip back to 1970 as we bring *FM* #71 to life while trying to avoid the carnage as Frankenstein and the Wolfman do battle (On the cover and in the pages!). Choose your monstrous path. Are you ready?



Victoria Price at the Imagi-Movies Film Festival

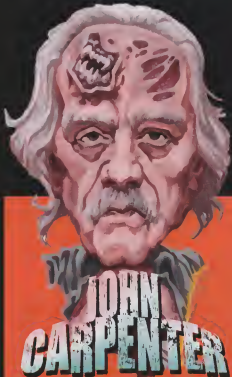
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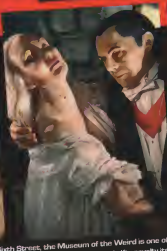
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